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THE IMPACT OF STATE EQUITY STANDARDS ON LEADERS' ESPOUSED

BELIEFS ABOUT SOCIAL JUSTICE

by

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ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF STATE EQUITY STANDARDS ON LEADERS ESPOUSED
BELIEFS ABOUT SOCIAL JUSTICE

Amanda Hadgraft
Old Dominion University
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School leaders are tasked with greater responsibilities than ever before. Today's school leaders are expected to act as social justice leaders, ensuring all students have an equitable environment to learn in. State departments of education hold leaders accountable by comparing standardized test scores of students in majority and minority groups. The problem is these assessments measure the outcome of learning, but fail to measure the environments learning occurs in. The purpose of this study was to understand, within the context of the accountability climate, school leaders' espoused beliefs about social justice, and the practices they employ to those ends. Using the dual lenses of epistemic injustice and critical race theory, in this qualitative research study, I sought to understand the complex bidirectional and reciprocal relationship between the accountability climate and school leaders' espoused beliefs and practices regarding social justice. After conducting my study with seven school leaders from six different school districts in Southeastern Virginia, I discovered school leaders believed social justice was a concern, however struggle with their role in eradicating societal injustices. My findings indicated how complex that relationship between the accountability climate and leaders practices are. I uncovered a schism between leaders' personal beliefs and unofficial practices when it came to social justice and the official practices required by central office supervisors. Although participants believed social justice was an issue they struggled to understand the role they should play in ending the cycle.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"It always seems impossible until it's done." I first saw this quote on a social media thread while I was sitting on the floor in my office, with dozens of transcripts and code notes strewn around me. At the time I was overwhelmed, frustrated, confused, and didn't think I would ever finish this dissertation; so those words spoke deeply to me. As every good doc-student, I decided to investigate the origins of this quote. It was attributed to Nelson Mandela. However, upon investigation I discovered there was no credible citation of this quote. Despite the lack of known authorship, I decided to take this quote as my moto, and recited it to myself every time I felt the task ahead of me was impossible to complete. As I reflect on my work on this dissertation over the past two years, this quote truly summarizes my journey. Every step seemed impossible; but now it is done.

I could not have completed this journey on my own. I need to give credit to many different people in my life. I first want to give a huge thank you to my committee. Without all of you I would still be floundering trying to narrow down a critical lens to frame this paper. Thank you to Dr. Myran, my chair, for encouraging me to take chances in writing this paper. Thank you for listening to me as I "spit-balled" ideas at you rapid fire so I could organize my frenzied thoughts and ideas into a coherent paper. Your excitement for my research re-invigorated me through any struggles I had. This paper would not have been possible without your guidance and support from its start to its completion. I would also like to thank Dr. Sunday and Dr. Sanzo for challenging my ideas in my proposal and guiding me to strengthen my arguments. I also need to thank Dr. Sanzo for everything you did throughout the program to help not only schedule my courses, but also for everything you did to help me improve my writing over the years. Your high standards and expectations made me a better and more

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Last but certainly not least I need to thank my cohort. We made it through course work, comps, IRB, research, writing, and everything in-between together. Courtney, this paper could not have been done without you! Thank you for reminding me that we've got this, and we can do anything! Our frantic text-conversations, vent sessions, crying, and celebrations helped me push through my roadblocks, and celebrate my achievements. Thank you for always listening, helping, and knowing just what to say!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Evaluation standards used to measure the success or failure of educational leaders have been in place since the establishment of the first American school houses (Ravitch, 2010). The implementation of accountability measures holding school leaders to high standards has increased exponentially over the past few decades (Linn, 2000); spurred by the role public schools play in both the politics and economics of the United States (Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, & Koschoreck, 2001). Leaders must regularly demonstrate their school successfully implements various national and state curriculum standards, their students can attain high marks on standardized tests, their teachers have met various certification requirements, and their students have equal access to rigorous educational opportunities (Skrla et al, 2001).

Accountability measures promoting equity have been a growing focus in recent decades (Shields, 2004; Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004; Linn, 2000). Educational leaders must demonstrate they foster equitable practices and process for all students no matter their race, socioeconomic status, gender, background, or culture (Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009; ESSA, 2015). Students' standardized assessment scores are used as evidence for the attainment of these accountability measures. (Shields, 2004; Skrla et al, 2001; Furman and Gruenewald, 2004; ESSA, 2015). If educational leaders can provide data indicating the narrowing of the academic achievement gap, they satisfy standards requiring them to be equitable leaders.

Social justice leaders "make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision" (Theoharis, 2007, p. 223). They strive to address and eradicate any form of marginalization within their schools (Theoharis, 2007). Therefore, I argue

a social justice leader continuously and consciously works to promote equity within their

schools. The definition I provided of a social justice leader was derived by Theoharis (2007)

through a synthesis of social justice leadership literature (Gewirtz 2006; Goldfarb & Grinberg,

2002; Bogotch, 2000). However, he admits social justice can hold different meanings to

different researchers, making it a difficult concept to define and therefore measure.

        Due to this difficulty, historic accountability standards have also failed to adequately

define, and therefore measure, if social justice is occurring in schools (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006).

Instead, these standards measure a leader based on their maintenance of equity standards rather

than social justice standards. This could be because leaders can only be held accountable when

standards are easily measureable (Klein, 1971). Equity can be measured through the comparison

of test scores, however social justice practices are more difficult to quantify. When performance

goals are difficult to assess, they are traditionally left out of accountability requirements because

in order to measure the extent to which a standard has been reached, it must first be defined and

measured (Klein, 1971).

        Scholars call for the need of social justice leadership, arguing the current education

system is rife with injustice due to varying levels of "…access, power, and privilege based on

race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, language, background, ability, and/or socioeconomic

position" (Brown, 2004, p. 79). However, since social justice has proven to be difficult to define

(Theoharis, 2007; Brown, 2004) accountability standards use equity as the standard to measure

leaders, rather than explicitly advocating for leaders to be socially just. Current standards require

leaders to use a comparison of gap group data, based on student standardized assessment test

scores, as evidence to show the level of equity attained in their schools (ESSA, 2015). I,

however, question if simply requiring a school leader to show evidence of equitability is enough

to promote the social justice leadership scholars argue is needed to end the inequalities currently experienced in schools (Brown, 2004; Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, & Koschoreck, 2001, Theoharis, 2007).

Equity vs Social Justice

Equity is defined as "justice according to natural law or right; *specifically*: freedom from bias or favoritism" (Merriam-Webster dictionary, 2018), while social justice is defined as "justice at the level of a society or state as regards the possession of wealth, commodities, opportunities, and privileges" (Oxford English Dictionary, 2018). While the two terms appear to be similar there is a difference; "… 'equity' is only one of the many values which may underlie a given system of justice" (Deutsch, 1975, p. 137). Equality is one aspect of social justice (Rawls, 1958; Miller, 1999); but the two are not the same. A school leader can boast they are equitable if they create a school free from favoritism; however cannot boast social justice leadership if they have not consciously fought to end inequalities based on wealth, opportunities, and privileges within society at large. Through my own synthesis of the literature, I suggest a social justice leader actively challenges an unjust status quo, acknowledges the voices of those who have been traditionally marginalized, and promotes a culture of social justice in their schools (Theoharis, 2007; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Gewirtz 2006; Bogotch, 2000; Auerbach, 2009; Delpit, 1988; Shields, 2004). To be a social justice leader, school leaders should be doing more than simply working to produce equal test scores between minority and majority students.

While equity and social justice are frequently used interchangeably in the literature (Miller, 1999), I sought to understand how impactful current accountability standards of equity are in influencing leaders to act in socially just ways. I believe using data from standardized assessment scores as evidence of equity has only mechanized schools (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006),

and fails to adequately measure the extent a leader is truly socially just. Klein (1971) argues

when leaders rely on simple standardized measures to assess school objectives, they ignore those

harder to quantify, thus leading to the failure of the attainment of necessary school goals.

Similar policies focusing on student achievement test scores have been used for almost half a

century to promote equity to no avail (Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, & Koschoreck, 2001).

Throughout this paper I argue inequities in schools are due to an unconscious institutional racism

systemically rooted in the practices, policies, and procedures of every school (Skrla, Scheurich,

Johnson, & Koschoreck, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), and therefore question if it can be

eradicated through the use of current equity standards focusing on a gap closing model. I

reference equity standards because there are currently no standards making specific reference to

social justice leadership.

Accountability Standards

The role of a social justice leader is to create school environments that support and

empower traditionally marginalized students (Bogotch, 2000; Theoharis, 2007; Jean-Marie,

Normore, & Brooks, 2009; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Shields, 2004). These leaders have an

obligation to ensure school practices, processes, and outcomes are equitable for all learners

(Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009). Some have argued they can do this by challenging an

unjust status quo, (Bogotch, 2000; Theoharis, 2007) stemming from a culture traditionally

marginalizing those in minority groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Researchers have argued a

successful social justice leader understands injustice exists and works to fight against a status

quo continuing to oppress minority students (Bogotch, 2000; Theoharis, 2007; Jean-Marie,

Normore, & Brooks, 2009). I question if simply using standardized test scores as a measurement

for equity in learning adequately measures if these social justice practices are occurring in schools.

Federal accountability standards for equity, such as the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, (ESSA) require school leaders to promote equity in their buildings. The goal of ESSA legislation "is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps" (ESSA, 2015, p. 13). State governments use student gap group scores on standardized assessments as measurement tools for accountability standards. Gap groups, or subgroups of children, are defined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as "economically disadvantaged students; students from a major racial and ethnic group; students with disabilities; [and] students with limited English proficiency" (ESEA, 2015, p. 21). If leaders can show a narrowing of scores between gap groups, they meet equity standard requirements.

Prior to the passage of ESSA, No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) legislation outlined equity standard requirements. Unlike NCLB, ESSA allows individual state governments, rather than the federal government, to decide how schools will be held accountable for equity (Klein, 2016). For example, in the State of Virginia, benchmark assessment data in English and mathematics are used to determine if equity standards have been met (Va. Code § 131-380). Leaders are required to show scores between students in gap groups and majority groups are narrowing to meet the standard (Va. Code § 131-380).

A History of Accountability

Although recent legislation uses standardized assessments as accountability tools, the phenomenon is not new. During the early 1900's, Edward Thorndike suggested using standardized assessments as an instrument for school accountability (Shepard, 2016). Thorndike

believed he could quantify education and measure successes and failures through gathering data from standardized assessments (Thorndike, 1918). He believed if students performed well on standardized assessments, it was evidence they had learned a certain set of material (Thorndike, 1918). He suggested these types of assessments could quantify and measure how much students had learned (Thorndike, 1918). Using this logic, a comparison of test scores between minority and majority group students should report if students from these groups are learning equally or not. Logic based on Thorndike's theories have remained the fundamental logic of accountability despite its limitations (Klein, 1971; Linn, 2000). While this underlying logic is consistent with the long standing scientific management foundation of the education system, it fundamentally may oppose the goals of true enduring learning.

Influence of Accountability Standards

The design and measurements used for an evaluation will have a large impact on the behaviors of those being evaluated (Klein, 1971). Patton (2007) reminds us of the old adage "what gets measured gets done" (p. 91). This means employees and staff members will focus on completing tasks they know are going to be evaluated. When the outcomes of an evaluation bare a heavy weight on the future of a program or organization, those being evaluated will strive to satisfy the criteria to obtain a "good" evaluation (Klein, 1971). Therefore, the behaviors awarding an organization the most successful evaluation are the activities most likely to be conducted (Shepard, 1991).

The newest accountability standards in the Every Student Succeeds Act measure the level of equity in a school, based on students' scores on standardized assessment end of course exams (ESSA, 2015; Va. Code § 131-380). This means school leaders will most likely engage in activities ensuring students score the highest on their end of course exams. However, these

activities may not reflect research-based strategies promoting social justice (Lauen & Gaddis, 2016). A good measurement tool should be based on the goals of the accountability standard. If the goal of equity standards is to ensure leaders eradicate injustices in schools, they should measure these practices as defined by the literature. By evaluating schools using standardized test scores, school leaders may engage in behaviors promoting higher test scores, and therefore meet the requirements of the evaluation, however fail to address the real problems of inequality in schools (Ladson-Billings 2006). Evaluations meant to influence leaders to engage in socially just behaviors must go deeper than the measurement of test scores (Darling-Hammond 2007; Au, 2013; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004).

The Learning Sciences

Given my short discussion of the logic underlying school accountability, it becomes clear accountability and standardized assessments present many challenges when defining what learning is and how to accurately measure it. Without a clear understanding of the science of learning, accountability will be limited in its measurement of learning to hold leaders accountable. Although it is not the main focus of this study, I am going to allow space here to acknowledge the challenges of accountability and have a brief discussion about the learning sciences in order to present a question about the validity of using standardized testing to measure the equity of learning.

Alexander, Schallert, & Reynolds (2009), define learning as both a process and a product. Learning as a process is the, "… course of operations resulting in relatively durable changes" (Alexander, Schallert, & Reynolds, 2009, p. 180). While learning as a product is "… the outcome of that process" (Alexander, Schallert, & Reynolds, 2009. p. 180). The problem with using standardized assessment scores to measure equity and social justice is these scores fail to

assess the learning environment (Furman & Gruenewald, 2004), because they do not measure learning as a process; they simply measure the end result. Researchers have explored different factors influencing learning as a process, including social and cultural influences. The way people around the learner interact with them can greatly impact what they learn, and the extent to which they learn (Alexander, Schallert, & Reynolds, 2009). When learners are supported and can build their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989) the chances of meaningful learning increase (Alexander, Schallert, & Reynolds, 2009). If students' abilities to build self-efficacy are hindered, the chances will decrease. When a leader is socially just, all learners should have equal access to experiences supporting and promoting their abilities as learners (Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009), despite societal privileges. However, standardized assessments measure the products of learning, while failing to assess the processes, thus conflating achievement with learning. While an exploration of learning as a process versus a product as it relates to social justice is an intriguing concept to study; I will leave that as a further implication for later researchers to address. For the purpose of this dissertation, understanding how the current system mechanizes learning as a product rather than measuring it as a process is all that is needed to question the effects current accountability measures have on social justice beliefs and practices of school leaders.

The Result of Conflating Achievement and Learning

Current accountability systems conflating high achievement scores and a narrowed achievement gap with equity and social justice (Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Karpinski & Lugg, 2006) may play a large role in influencing the behaviors and beliefs of school leaders. If what is being measured is what is getting done (Patton, 2007; Klein, 1971), the requirements of these accountability systems may influence leaders' practices. This means leaders may focus on

student test scores, while failing to address the environment students are learning in (Ladson-Billings, 2006). A focus on student test scores may even result in leaders engaging in behaviors limiting equity in schools rather than promoting it (Darling-Hammond, 2007). When school leaders focus on preparing students for a test, it results in a narrowed curriculum, where teachers focus on lower level content and skills they believe will appear on end of course assessments (Au, 2009; Frederiksen, 1984; Shepard, 1991; Klein, 1971; Lauen & Gaddis, 2016). This is especially true for students who traditionally perform poorly on exams. These students are put into classrooms focusing on test prep, while failing to expose students to higher level skills (Shepard, 1991), resulting in greater inequity in the processes of learning, rather than greater equity.

Critical Race Theory and Epistemic Injustice

School leaders operate in a complex environment filled with systems designed to end injustices through accountability. Two related theories; critical race theory (CRT) and epistemic injustice, propose theoretical lenses used to analyze the climate school leaders' social justice beliefs and practices are shaped. Understanding the climate accountability policies for equity and social justice are formed within is important because, according to Fowler (2013), the climate a policy is formed in will impact both its creation and implementation. If accountability measures influence the beliefs and practices of school leaders, and the climate these measures are formed in influence how they are crafted, understanding this climate through the use of CRT and epistemic injustice is important.

Critical race theory was first used to explain injustices in the legal field (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). It was presented by Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman to explain the impact of epistemic racism in the field of law in the 1970's (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). They believed

racial reforms of the 1960's Civil Rights Movements had slowed, and sought to find a new way to understand the deeply entrenched racism in American culture (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Tate, 1997). CRT proposes racism has become a normalized part of our society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Educational theorist have applied CRT to explain continued injustices in the field of education (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Gillborn, 2006; Jay, 2003). These scholars analyze school-wide programs through the lens of CRT to understand why there is still a gap between traditionally marginalized and majority students' test scores.

Epistemic injustice occurs when society accepts a status quo in which those in power continue to implement norms exacerbating their privilege by denying those in marginalized groups' credit as equal knowledge claimants (Fricker, 1998; McConkey, 2004). Societal injustices allow unjust power dynamics to remain the same. Ending this epistemic injustice in the United States should be the priorities of socially just leaders (Theoharis, 2007; Bogotch, 2000). Using CRT and epistemic injustice as lenses to understand the climate shaping school leaders beliefs and practices about social justice is important to assess their success or failure as socially just leaders. Through this research, I sought to understand the complex bidirectional and reciprocal relationship between the accountability climate and school leaders espoused beliefs and practices about social justice leadership through the dual lens of CRT and epistemic injustice.

Figure #1 shows the logic framing this paper. Traditionally, standardized assessment exams have been used as accountability tools to determine the extent school leaders promote social justice (Au, 2013). Students' test scores are used as a way to measure equity through a comparison of gap group scores (Va. Code § 131-380). If these standards are truly meant to

encourage leaders to act socially just by creating an equitable learning environment for all students (ESSA, 2015), they should influence leaders to engage in behaviors promoting social justice. The purpose of this study was to understand, within the context of the accountability climate, school leaders' espoused beliefs about social justice, and the practices they employ to those ends. Using the dual lenses of epistemic injustice and critical race theory, I sought to understand the complex bidirectional and reciprocal relationship between the accountability climate and school leaders' espoused beliefs and practices regarding social justice.

How do these norms influence school leaders' espoused beleifs and practices about social justice?

Social justice and equity is evaluated by comparing standardized assessment scores, and narrowing scores between "gap groups".

Traditionally, standardized assessment exams have been used to evaluate student learning and school success.

Figure 1. Frame of the study. This figure shows the logic framing the study.

Statement of the Problem

Although accountability standards to promote equity in schools have been in place for decades, a disparity in education still exists (Au, 2013; Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, & Koschoreck, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Mirci, Loomis, & Hensley, 2011). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the nation-wide drop-out rate in 2016 was 6.1% (Table

219.70, 2018). For white students, this rate was 5.2%; but for black students the number was

6.2%. NCES (2018), reports this percentage is not statistically significant enough to note any

difference, however, this is the first year since 2000 there has been a statistically insignificant

drop-out rate between White and African American students. Between 1970 and the present, the

dropout rate was consistently lower for whites than black students according to NCES data

(Table 219.70, 2018). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, Students are

classified as "dropouts" if they are between the ages of 16 and 24 and are not currently enrolled

in school, or have failed to earn a high school diploma, or equivalency certificate like a GED

(2018).

      According to NCES (2018) data, for the 2016-2017 school year, the cohort graduation

rates for public school students was at 84.6%. This statistic represents the percentage of students

who graduate on-time, in four years, with their freshman cohort, based on Adjusted Cohort

Graduation Rate data (NCES, 2018). For white students, the adjusted cohort graduation rate was

88.6%, but for black students it was 77.8% (NCES, 2018, Table 219.46). Although the gap

between graduation rates is slightly different when compared to the 2013-2014 school year data,

there is still a disparity. During that year, 84.2% of white students graduated on-time when

compared to 67.2% of African American students (NCES, 2018, Table 219.46). According to the

VDOE, in Virginia the on-time graduation rate in 2018 for black students was 89.54%, while for

white students it was 94.49% (2018). Despite trends showing the overall graduation rate

increasing, and the dropout rate decreasing, there is still a difference between the success of

students in minority and majority ethic and economic groups (See Table 1).

      There is also a disparity between the representation of white and black students enrolled

in gifted and talented programs in American public schools. During the 2013-2014 school years,

there were 1,937,350 white students enrolled in gifted and talented programs, and only 330,774

Africa American students (NCES, 2018, Table 204.80). In Virginia, there were 97,272 white

students enrolled in these programs and only 17,787 African American students were enrolled

(NCES, 2018, Table 204.80). This disparity shows, even if there is less than a difference of 5

percentage points between on-time graduation rates for White and African American students,

there is a large disparity between the educational environments these students are experiencing.

National & Virginia Student Statistics

Category	Total	Black	White
National Dropout Rate (2016)	6.1%	6.2%	5.2%
National Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (2016)	84.6%	77.6%	88.6%
Virginia Students Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (2018)	91.62%	89.54%	94.49%
National Percentage of Students in Gifted and Talented Programs (2013-2014)	6.7%	4.3%	7.3%
Virginia Percentage of Students in Gifted and Talented Programs (2013-2014)	12.1%	6.0%	14.6%
National Number of Students in Gifted and Talented Programs (2013-2014)	3,329,544	330,774	1,937,350
Virginia Students in Gifted and Talented Programs (2013-2014)	154,326	97,272	17,787

Table 1. National & Virginia student statistics. Dropout, graduation rate, gifted and talented enrollment statistics: Selected years 2013-2016.

The problem is, although there is a growing amount of research showing inequality in

schools, and many offer school-level practices to address inequalities; few studies analyze why

this inequality continues to occur (Gillborn, 2006; Gillborn, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Morris

& Perry, 2016). Standardized assessment scores report there is a learning gap between majority

and minority students, but fail to explain why (Gillborn, 2006; Gillborn, 2008; Morris & Perry,

2016). Current practice suggests by narrowing the achievement gap, leaders will be successful

decreasing the level of inequality reported in schools (ESSA, 2015). The theory is if students are

attaining equal scores on standardized assessments, it is evidence all students are getting equal

access to education. This is based on the idea tests can adequately measure learning (Levin,

1974). If equal learning has occurred, then it is concluded social justice has been practiced by

the school leaders (Au, 2013). However, I argue evidence of equity is not necessarily evidence

of social justice. If it is the goal of school leaders to be socially just, I question the success

current equability standards have in promoting it. In order to fully understand the result of our

current standards, it is necessary to understand how they are influencing the behaviors and

espoused beliefs of leaders.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to understand, within the context of the accountability

climate, school leaders' espoused beliefs about social justice, and the practices they employ to

those ends. Using the dual lenses of epistemic injustice and critical race theory in this qualitative

research study, I sought to understand the complex bidirectional and reciprocal relationship

between the accountability climate and school leaders' espoused beliefs and practices regarding

social justice. The questions I addressed throughout my research were the following:

> 1) What are school leader's espoused beliefs about social justice?
>   a.) What internal and external factors influence these beliefs?
>   b.) How do these beliefs influence their social justice goals?
>   c.) Do accountability standards influence these beliefs and goals?
> 2) What are the practices school leaders utilize to achieve their social justice goals?
> 3) What are the interactions between or among their beliefs about social justice and
>   accountability standards?

Significance of the Study

In 2017, a new secretary of education was named by President Donald Trump. While

Betsy Devos has been a controversial figure in education, she is opening the dialogue about

school choice and school evaluation procedures. With the possibility of expanding school

choice, there will be a greater reliance on accountability systems. It is extremely important for

school leaders to understand the impact these systems have on their beliefs and practices. This

study analyzed how leaders' espoused beliefs and practices regarding social justice are

influenced, in school districts in Hampton Roads, Virginia.

Adequately measuring social justice is important because the standards used to measure

leaders may influence their behaviors (Patton, 2007). Evaluations impact behaviors of those

being assessed, and may influence the environments students learning in (Resnick & Resnick,

1992). Social justice evaluations have the power to "enhance fair and just distribution of benefits

and responsibilities, or it can distort such distributions and contribute to inequality" (Patton,

2007 p.102-103). Therefore, it is important to understand how equity standards impact the

espoused beliefs and practices of school leaders when it comes to social justice behaviors.

Limitations of the Study

In conducting my study, there were a few limitations I had to be aware of. The first

limitation is I am a white female conducting research into social justice. Some critical race

theorists believe only researcher's from marginalized groups should conduct research into social

justice and inequity (Hayes & Juarez, 2009). They argue too many "White Liberals" use the

theory as a way to be saviors to African-Americans, thus exacerbating the cultural belief African

Americans need the help of dominant white scholars in their plight for social justice (Hayes &

Juarez, 2009). Too many white scholars, using CRT in their research, fail to accept their

dominance and privilege in a society with epistemic racism (Hayes & Juarez, 2009). When a

white scholar writes about CRT, they are colonizing the theory (Hayes & Juarez, 2009), and pose

a high threat of framing their findings and conclusions through a lens of white privilege.

However, other researchers believe it is possible for a researcher in the majority to conduct this type of research as long as they are reflexive about their own biases. Cheryl Matias (2013) discusses the importance of white teacher-candidates understanding the implications of their own white-ness before being able to successfully engage in culturally responsive teaching. She argues white teachers who do not first fully understand the impact their whiteness has in exacerbating white dominance over groups of color, will continue the cycle of oppression, despite their best intentions (Matias, 2013). Like these white-teacher candidates, it was important for me, as a white woman, to understand my own privilege, as well as racial biases before I conducted my research. I not only needed to reflect on my privilege but reflect on my own beliefs about equity, social justice, and my reasons for conducting this study as well.

The majority of educators are white, middle-class women (Matias, 2013). If these educators are not reflexive of where their beliefs and values stem from, they are at risk of continuing to promote the dominance of white culture, thus keeping those in other groups marginalized (Liviatan & Jost, 2011). Similarly, I was reflective of my own values and beliefs, as a women in the majority group, to ensure the analysis of my data was not skewed toward through the lens of white domination. I did this by keeping a reflexive journal, noting my upbringing, feelings about equity and social justice, and motivations for conducting this field work.

A second limitation to this study is its focus on leaders' espoused beliefs. In order to understand what my participants believe about social justice, and what influenced those beliefs, I conducted interviews (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Interviews ask participants to speak candidly about their beliefs, feelings, and understandings (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). I interviewed my participants about their beliefs and practices of social justice. This topic may have made school

leaders uncomfortable. They may have, initially, given politically correct answers they thought I

wanted to hear, or thought made them look "better." No school leader is going to want to appear

to be racist, as failing to promote racial equity in their schools. In order to get the most honest

responses, I worked to establish a good rapport with my participants (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992;

Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I did not begin to address topics of social justice until the second or

third interview session. I also conducted observations of my participants. This allowed me to

compare their interview answers about their practices to practices I observed. This helped me

gain a deeper understanding of both my participants stated beliefs and their practices.

A third limitation is the difficulty defining and measuring social justice. Although most

social justice theorists believe in the necessity of being socially just, few agree on a standard

definition for what that looks like (Theoharis, 2008). For the purpose of this study I synthesized

research on social justice, and used three practices many researchers agree are pivotal for social

justice leaders to engage in. These include acknowledging the voices of students and their

families' part of traditionally marginalized groups, teaching social justice, and fighting against an

unjust status quo. I prefaced my interviews by clarifying my definition of social justice as

practices making"… issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other

historically and currently marginalized conditions in the United States central to… advocacy"

(Theoharis, 2007). Glesne & Peshkin, (1992). This helped ensure my participants understood

the purpose of the interview and that we were both on the same level of understanding.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this paper I will be using the following terms:

Accountability – Accountability systems are "a closed loop reflecting a chain of
responses to perceived needs or demands; an activity or set of activities that emerges to fill those
demands; outcomes that result from those activities; and feedback on outcomes to the sources of
the demands" (Levin, 1974, p. 375). The term "accountability" can have many meanings. For the
purpose of this study, I will define accountability as a performance-reporting tool, meant to

measure a leaders' attainment of goals (Levin, 1974). In this paper I will focus on leader accountability for social justice. In the State of Virginia, school leaders are held accountable to act as social justice leaders by continually narrowing achievement gap scores between minority and majority students (Va. Code § 131-380).

Achievement Gap – the Achievement Gap is defined by the U.S. Department of Education as the "…difference in the performance between each ESEA [Elementary and Secondary Education Act] subgroup… within a participating LEA [local educational agency] or school and the statewide average performance of the LEA's or State's highest achieving subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics as measured by the assessments required under the ESEA."

Critical Race Theory – critical race theory is part of a critical movement of "activists and scholars engaged in studying and transforming the relationship among race, racism and power" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 3). The theory was originally used in legal scholarship to explore the effects of racial power dynamics on law; growing out of an earlier legal theory called critical legal studies, (Ladson-Billings, 1998, Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Critical race theory suggests "…racism is ordinary, not aberrational…" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 8). It has become engrained in the everyday values and practices of our society. It argues racist practices remain in place because they support the power of the dominant majority groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Unjust policies become difficult to address because of lack of acknowledgement on the part of the majority (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Finally, critical race theorists argue race is a socially constructed understanding rather than being genetic or biological (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Educational scholars apply this theory to educational systems in an attempt to explain the sustained inequality African American students face in education (Ladson-Billings, 1998), despite decades of policies aimed to reduce inequality in schools.

Epistemic Injustice – The theory of Epistemic Injustice was introduced by Miranda Fricker (1998). It "concerns the process of credibility conferral upon knowledge claimants" (McConkey, 2004, p. 198). Because those in the dominant group hold the majority of the power, they are the ones who usually get to determine who is credible and who is not. Typically, those in marginalized groups are denied this credibility (McConkey, 2004). When a person is denied credibility due to their social class, gender, or race, Epistemic Injustice has occurred (McConkey, 2004).

Equity – The goal of a social justice leader is to promote equity in their schools. For the purpose of this paper Bradley's Scott's (2001) definition of systemic equity is used. Systemic equity occurs when systems naturally function in a way that all students have the best opportunity to learn, and access to resources necessary for them to achieve (Scott, 2001).

Every Student Succeeds Act – According to the U.S. Department of Education, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is an act signed by President Obama on December 10th, 2015. It reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and "…builds on key areas of progress in recent years by the efforts of educators, communities, parents, and students across the

country" (ESSA, 2015). Some of the goals of ESSA include increasing equity in schools for traditionally disadvantaged students, require all students be taught to rigorous standards to prepare them for college, provide data for educators, families, students, and communities using statewide assessments to measure students' progress, and maintain accountability for lowest-performing schools (ESSA, 2015).

Gap Groups - Gap groups, or subgroups of children, are defined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as "economically disadvantaged students; students from a major racial and ethnic group; students with disabilities; [and] students with limited English proficiency" (ESEA, Sec 111 (b)(2)(C)(c)(II)).**Social Justice** – Social justice had been defined in multiple ways by multiple researchers. For the purpose of this study, I will be defining social justice as practices making"… issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalized conditions in the United States central to… advocacy" (Theoharis, 2007).

Knowledge Claimants – A rational authority deemed to be a good informant (Fricker, 1998). To be considered a good informant, one must be considered to be both competent and trustworthy (Fricker, 1988). These qualities are determined by those who are in dominant groups in society. If one is defined as a credible knowledge claimant, their voices and concerns are heard and considered valid, and they will be granted a voice in society (McConkey, 2004). Some knowledge claimants are granted more credibility than others based on the decisions of the dominant social group (McConkey, 2004).

Social Justice – Social justice had been defined in multiple ways by multiple researchers. For the purpose of this study, I will be defining social justice as practices making"… issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalized conditions in the United States central to… advocacy" (Theoharis, 2007).

Organization of the study

This dissertation will be organized into five chapters. In Chapter One, I have already discussed my problem statement and its background. I have also presented the purpose and significance of the study, presenting a brief history of educational leader accountability to highlight the historic reliance on standardized assessment scores as accountability tools. In Chapter Two, I will present literature on social justice leadership, epistemic injustice, and critical race theory to build a framework allowing me to better understand the environment leaders' beliefs about social justice are formed. In Chapter Three, I will discuss the methodology I will use in my study. This section will discuss the methods, participant selection, data collection

tools, data analysis I will use throughout my study. Chapter Four will be a presentation of my

findings, and Chapter Five will be a discussion about the significance of the findings I have

presented and my overall conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study, I examined social justice leadership by using a dual frame; blending portions of the theories of epistemic injustice and critical race theory, in order to understand the role the environment plays in informing leaders' espoused beliefs and practices about social justice. I combine these two lens as my framework because I saw an overlap in how they relate to one another. Theories of epistemic injustice are used to analyze the injustices ingrained in our culture, and critical race theory calls on us to question the role white racial dominance plays in the exacerbation of these injustices. Both theories suggest members of dominant social groups willingly accept policies and procedures supporting an unjust status quo to maintain their dominance; on conscious or subconscious levels. Both theories also focus on the importance of acknowledging the voices of those who have been traditionally marginalized to legitimize their role as equal players in decision making processes, and lessen instances of injustice. These pieces serve as threads to tie the two lenses together in my framework. Figure 2 depicts a diagram demonstrating how the two theories relate to one another.

In the first section of my literature review I will synthesize justice literature to establish the definition of social justice I use in this study. I will then review social justice leadership literature to better define the role of a social justice leader in schools. In this portion I will introduce and justify the characteristics I argue embody a successful social justice leader. Much of the research focuses on the leader's job to end an unjust status quo (Bogotch, 2000; Theoharis, 2007). In the third and fourth sections of my literature review I will present literature examining epistemic injustice and critical race theory; the two theories I will use to frame my study. Finally, I will introduce and explain the blended lens used to frame my research. I will be using

portions of epistemic injustice; focusing on the impact of race in the conferral of credibility as a knowledge claimant, and critical race theory; focusing on the need to be critical of the underlying values dominating educational policies relating to race, equity and social justice in my framework. I combine these two lenses because I see an overlap in how they relate to one another. Theories of epistemic injustice bring to light the injustices ingrained in our culture, and critical race theory calls on us to question the role white racial dominance plays in the exacerbation of these injustices.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY

- Structural Determinism

- Racism accepted the status quo

- Interest convergence

- Counterstorytelling

- Counterstories & giving a voice to the marginalized

- Racism as the accepted status quo

EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE

- Conferral of Credibility as a Knowledge Claimant

- Lack of acceptance in Rhetorical Spaces

- Testimonial Injustices

- Hermeneutical Injustices

Figure 2. Critical Lenses. Shows overlap between the two lenses making up my framework
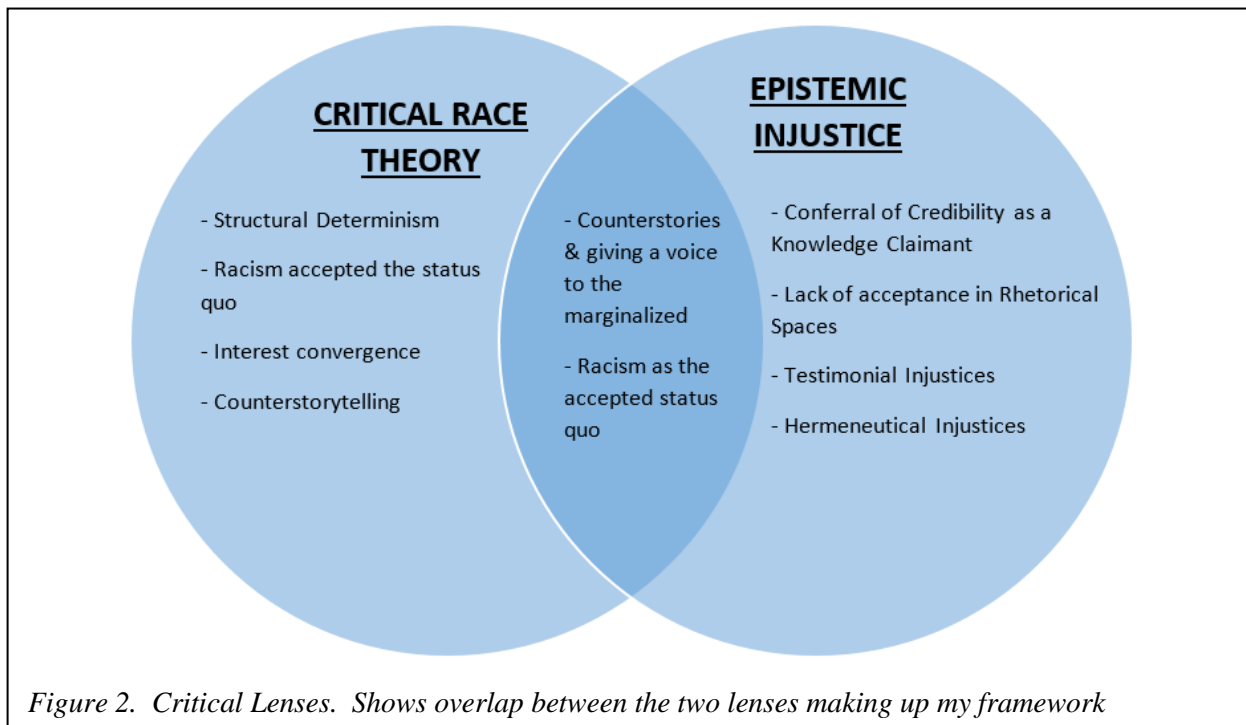
A Theory of Social Justice

A social justice leader promotes social justice in their building by "mak[ing] issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and

vision" (Theoharis, 2007, p. 223). To fully understand the responsibilities social justice leader, one must first understand the definition of "social justice." Although the modern concept of social justice is recent (Jackson, 2005), theoretical discussions of justice can be found in the literature dating back to Aristotle (Rawls, 1971; Fleischacker, 2004; Jackson, 2005; Bogotch, 2000). Theories of social justice have their roots in other justice theories, however an analysis can be daunting because there is no universal understanding for the concept of justice (Rawls, 1971; Fleischacker, 2004; Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001; Raphael, 2001). Evaluations of justice change based on the individual, environments, and motivations of those living in different times, societies, and cultures (Cropanzano, et al, 2001); and the way justice is understood and measured has changed throughout centuries of discussion (Fleischacker, 2004). John Rawls believed anyone "…engaged in an institution or affected by it…" was owed equal justice (Rawls, 1967, p. 133). However, an agreement on who constitutes as a valid member of a community, and therefore entitled to justice, has changed over time and place (Deutsch, 1975). Although an analysis of the changing meanings of justice is intriguing, it is not my intent to explore the evolution in this paper. For the purpose of this dissertation, my discussion of justice will be used to deduce the modern understandings of the concept.

The theory of distributive justice; formally postulated in its modern understanding during the late 19th/ early 20th centuries, is commonly used interchangeably with social justice (Miller, 1999). However, I agree with arguments made by Young (1990) suggesting although related, the two theories represent two different forms of justice. In my opinion, the type of social justice school leaders should promote is epistemic rather than distributive. I will use this section of my literature review to briefly introduce the theory of distributive justice, and show distinctions between the promotions of distributive justice versus an epistemic form of social justice. This

discussion is necessary because school leaders can only be held accountable for what can be

defined and measured (Klein, 1971). Therefore, I must first define what justice "looks like"

before I can begin a discussion of what behaviors a social justice leader should be held

accountable for engaging in.

Distributive Justice

The modern definition of distributive justice was first presented in the literature by John

Rawls (Fleischacker, 2004). While heavily influenced by Aristotle and Enlightenment notions of

justice, Rawls' theory focused on an equal distribution of goods based on merit (Rawls, 1971)

and argued against people simply being rewarded in accordance to their political status

(Fleischacker, 2009). Justice is a virtue of social institutions, defined as "…the way in which the

major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of

advantages from social cooperation" (Rawls, 1971, p. 7). Social justice is attained when there is

an equal distribution of primary goods and primary social goods (Rawls, 1971; Deutsch, 1975).

Primary goods are considered to be "…what persons need in their status as free and equal

citizens, and as normal and fully cooperating members of a society over a complete life" (Rawls,

1999, p. xii); while primary social goods are "…rights and liberties, opportunities and powers,

income and wealth… [and] a sense of one's own worth…" (Rawls, 1971, p. 92).

Although distributive justice argues for the fair and equal distribution of primary goods

(Deutsch, 1975; Rawls, 1958; Rawls, 1971), it does not go as far as to suggest everyone is

entitled to the same goods, or to speak out against inequalities between different groups of

people. The two principle foundations of the theory of distributive justice are:

> … each person participating in a practice, or affected by it, has an equal right to the most
>
> extensive liberty compatible with a like liberty for all; and second, inequalities are

arbitrary unless it is reasonable to expect that they will work out for everyone's

advantage, and provided the positions and offices for which they attach, or from which

they may be gained, are open to all (Rawls, 1958, p. 48).

Rawls (1958; 1971; 1999) makes it clear distributive justice is attained when primary goods are

distributed equally among those in equivalent social positions. Inequalities between social

classes are justified so long as those inequalities result in an overall advantage for everyone, and

everyone has had equal access to positions offering different rewards (Rawls, 1967). Therefore,

Rawls accepts justice has been attained, even when inequalities between people of different

social classes exist.

The theory of distributive justice focuses on the outcomes of justice (Miller, 1999), with

an emphasis on the equitable distribution of primary goods (Rawls, 1971; Miller, 1999).

Although there is a focus on equal distribution, distributive justice theorists make clear this

distribution should be founded on merit based on the efforts (Rawls, 1967; Miller, 1999). They

do not argue for complete social equality (Fleischacker, 2004), but instead recognize justice

occurs when people of equal status get what they equally deserve (Rawls, 1967; Rawls, 1971;

Miller, 1999). This theory of justice does not question the social institutions preserving class

differentiations. Theorists accept differences between social classes are natural due to natural

talent and differing life circumstances resulting in different levels of merit (Miller, 1999). As

long as all citizens have an equal opportunity to attain different positions, resulting inequalities

between social classes are acceptable (Rawls, 1967; Rawls, 1971). Distributive justice theorists

accept institutions as they are, questioning the outcomes of distribution, while failing to question

the hierarchical structures involved in the distribution process (Young, 1990).

Social Justice

        Iris Young challenges the practice of using the terms "distributive justice" and "social

justice" interchangeably (1990). She disagrees social justice should only be concerned with the

distribution of goods or wealth (Young, 1990), because the focus remains on justice as a product

rather than a process (Young, 1990; Miller, 1999). Instead of being concerned with how

products of wealth, rights, or occupations are distributed, the focus of social justice should be on

the processes involved in the distribution of goods if a substantial change is going to be made

(Young, 1990). Maintaining a focus on distribution ignores "…the social structure and

institutional context that often help to determine distributive patterns… [as well as] issues of

decision making power and procedures, division of labor, and culture" (Young, 1990, p. 15).

Those in positions of decision making authority tend to be members of the privileged group,

resulting in the continued promotion of their status, while failing to address needs of other

groups (Young, 1990; Liviatan & Jost, 2011). Young believes two "…conditions define

injustice: oppression, [defined as] the institutional constraint on self-development, and

domination, [defined as] the institutional constraint on self-determination" (Young, 1990, p. 37).

By failing to question institutional structures promoting oppression, domination; and therefore

injustice, true justice cannot be attained.

Epistemic Justice

        In 2007 Fricker introduced the concept of epistemic justice to the pool of justice theories.

The theory suggests injustice occurs when society accepts a status quo where those in power

continue to implement norms exacerbating their privilege by denying those in marginalized

groups' credit as equal knowledge claimants (Fricker, 1998; McConkey, 2004). This can occur

due to testimonial and hermeneutical injustices. Testimonial injustice occurs when the

information attained from a "knower" is deemed untrustworthy, or unimportant, because they have been labeled as "incompetent" by the society (Fricker, 2013; Frank, 2013). Hermeneutical injustice occurs when those in marginalized groups are unable to make sense of their experiences because of the lack of socially available epistemic resources (Fricker, 2013; Frank, 2013). I will use epistemic injustice as a lens to better understand the environments school leaders' beliefs and practices are formed in, and will therefore present a more in-depth discussion of the theory later in this section.

Fricker suggests epistemic justice can only be attained when all individuals are given credit for the knowledge they possess (Fricker, 2007). This can occur when individuals adopt epistemic virtues pushing them to be critical and reflexive of their own prejudices and biases when it comes to granting knowledge credit to others (Fricker, 2007). Fricker defines virtues as personal motivations to do good, remaining resilient over time and through adversity (2013). She defines two epistemic virtues: virtues of testimonial justice and virtues of hermeneutical justice. One who has a virtue of testimonial justice actively corrects for the influences of prejudice in their credibility judgements (Fricker, 2007); while one who has a virtue of hermeneutical justice is reflective and critical to "…any reduced intelligibility incurred by the speaker owing to a gap in collective hermeneutical resources" (Fricker, 2007, p. 7). She believes when people adopt these epistemic virtues justice can be achieve (Fricker, 2007).

While current researchers believe individual personal epistemic virtues are not enough to create a more just society (Anderson, 2012), Fricker has spoken to ways to apply these virtues to the larger society to facilitate change. She suggests personal virtues can become institutional ones when there is joint commitment from the majority of individuals in a society, by distributing the virtue through training, or a hybrid of both (Fricker, 2013). However, other

researchers question how easy it would be to create the institutional virtues Fricker suggests (Anderson, 2012). They recognize structural injustices will require structural remedies, but are unsure how to enact shared institutional virtues of justice; although suggest creating socially just schools could be a first step (Anderson, 2012). Researchers recognize when diverse individuals share an equal learning experience they engage in dialogue and learn about one another's' experiences, and create a shared reality to overcome both testimonial and hermeneutical injustices (Anderson, 2012).

Defining Social Justice

The promotion of epistemic justice cannot be understood through the lens of distributive justice. Epistemic injustice occurs when those in marginalized groups are not granted credit as equal knowledge claimants (Fricker, 1998; McConkey, 2004). The prejudices influencing testimonial injustices, and the lack of accepted hermeneutical resources for members of minority groups are due to unjust political structures (Fricker, 2007; Anderson, 2012). Equally distributing primary goods and primary social goods will not change the structures causing the unfair distribution of goods to occur. Therefore an understanding of social justice as Young presented it will be necessary for the purposes of this study.

For the purpose of this dissertation, I understand social justice as Young (1990) defines it, rather than Rawls' understanding of social justice in terms of distribution. Young argues "…where social group differences exist and some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, social justice requires explicitly acknowledging and attending to those group differences in order to undermine oppression" (1990. p. 3). I believe this conception of social justice best embodies the responsibilities of social justice leaders as described in the literature. A socially just leader does not simply focus on equally distributing outcomes, but instead should be

focused on the processes involved in promoting equal educational opportunities. In the next section of my literature review I will synthesize social justice leadership literature to establish a definition of what is required for a leader to be considered socially just.

Social Justice Leadership

Promoting a culture of equity for all students has become a major focus for school leaders (Bogotch, 2000). The promotion of social justice in schools has become an even greater concern for educational leaders during the 21st century (Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009). Although there is growing pressure for school leaders to be socially just, the concept is not new in the educational world. The theoretical concept of social justice has been an important aspect of education since Plato (Bogotch, 2000). While the necessity to treat students equally is rarely contested, a shared understanding of social justice leadership in practice has yet to be reached (Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis, 2008; Brown, 2004), partially due to the complexity of defining what social justice leadership looks like in practice. Theoharis (2007) defines social justice leaders as those who "make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision" (p. 223); however a working definition has not been agreed upon by those in the field. Therefore, this portion of my literature review will serve to synthesize social justice leadership literature, allowing me to define characteristics social justice leaders should possess to be successful.

Characteristics of a Social Justice Leader

There are many different interpretations of social justice leadership for education, however most focus on improving experiences of marginalized students by challenging a traditionally unjust status quo (Theoharis, 2007; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Gewirtz 2006).

Social justice requires the conscious and deliberate use of power to eradicate systems

reproducing the dominance of traditional majority groups (Bogotch, 2000; Goldfarb & Grinberg,

2002; Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, & Koschoreck, 2001). Through a synthesis of the literature, I

have deduced three characteristics successful social justice leaders possess (See Figure #3).

Social justice leaders listen to the voices of marginalized students and their families (Auerbach,

2009, Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Delpit, 1988); teach students to "do social justice" as part of

school curriculum to enact societal change (Shields, 2004); and actively challenge practices

exacerbating the power of dominant groups at the expense of the marginalized (Bogotch, 2000,

Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Theoharis, 2007). These leaders are transformative in nature, and

strive to inspire their staff to be critical of the injustices society promotes both inside and outside

of the classroom (Shields, 2004; Brown, 2004; Theoharis, 2007). I will now use my literature

review to substantiate how each of these characteristics support successful social justice

leadership.

Figure 3. Characteristics of a social justice leader. Three factors characterizing a successful social justice leader
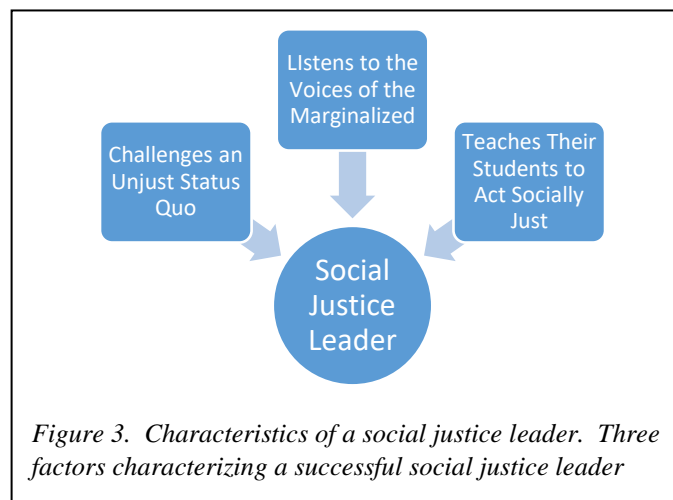
Fostering student voice. The structure of today's education system is reminiscent of the

antiquated factory model (Shepard, 2000). Students are sorted into classrooms based on

intelligence, scheduled around the sound of a bell, and assessed based on their ability to recall information their teacher has instructed them on. These norms were created during a time when minority students were outwardly discriminated against. Even though times have changed, and school accountability standards fight to increase equity, those who have been traditionally marginalized still rarely get a chance to take part in the conversation when it comes to designing equity programs for education (Delpit, 1988). Therefore, they must participate in systems that rarely meet their needs; and instead continue to promote an unjust status quo, as it did in the past (Shields, 2004; Bogotch, 2000; Theoharis, 2008, Au, 2013; Delpit, 1988). Socially just leaders fight against this status quo, by listening to the voices of those who have been traditionally marginalized.

In practice, this can be done through a conscious decision to be an open and active communicator with students and families of groups who have been traditionally marginalized (Auerbach, 2009, Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002). Traditionally, school programs designed to promote equity in schools are not designed by those who will be most affected by them (Delpit, 1988). Instead, these programs are designed by those who currently hold the power, while the voices of the marginalized remain silenced (Delpit, 1988). This becomes an issue because individuals in the dominant group support programs protecting their status of dominance, defeating the intended purpose of supposed social justice programs (Liviatan & Jost, 2011). If these families are not included in the conversation about school reform and equity, programs designed to promote social justice may fail to produce results increasing equity in schools.

When families and students have a voice, it allows the leader to address their concerns, and results in them being active in their education. When social justice leaders create programs to address the needs of these families, rather than simply create programs they believe will fit the

needs of these groups, they increase the level of equity in their schools (Auerbach, 2009).

Including these voices in the creation of programs to help marginalized groups will give them a

voice, and their narrative will become central when creating equity in a school building.

Weiss (1998) argued those being most affected by an evaluation should be involved in

creating it. Those in the majority tend to be the people who are given the most political power

(Liviatan & Jost, 2011). Therefore, those who have been traditionally marginalized rarely have a

say in the creation of the systems evaluating leaders to promote equity in their buildings. Those

in these minority groups may have different concerns they wish could be met by the evaluation

(Weiss, 1998, Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002). By involving the voices of these groups in the

creation of an accountability process, there is an increased chance activities addressing the needs

of those who have been traditionally marginalized will be evaluated, and therefore promote

social justice (Auerbach, 2009). Furthermore, involving those who have been traditionally

marginalized in the conversation about what needs to be evaluated, may give them increased say

in policies addressing and promoting their specific needs (McConkey, 2004).

Teaching social justice. Leaders who are socially just understand their schools function

in an environment with a historically unjust status quo (Bogotch 2000; Theoharis, 2007), and

fight these norms. One way they do this is by supporting teacher initiative to teach students to

question norms, and promote social justice themselves, outside of the classroom (Shields, 2004).

By "teaching" social justice, teachers validate the experiences of marginalized students (Shields,

2004). This validation will foster the student voices Delpit (1988) believes is so important in the

promotion of social justice.

Teaching social justice means teachers create environments where students are

comfortable being themselves, because they know they will be accepted. Teachers can use a

strategy of "culturally relevant teaching" to promote social justice in their classrooms (Matias, 2013). Culturally relevant teaching creates collective empowerment amongst students by showing them they can be successful, allowing them to maintain their cultural identities, and allowing them to develop critical consciousness to challenge injustices (Ladson-Billings, 1995). This type of teaching goes beyond being "multicultural" (Matias, 2013). Instead, it is transformative, and urges students to push for social actions to challenge the unjust status quo (Schoorman, & Bogotch, 2010).

McConkey, (2004) points to epistemic injustice as a reason why there is still a disparity between groups who have been traditionally in the majority versus those traditionally marginalized. Even though there are laws banning outward discrimination, there is no way to stop people from making personal judgements based on their learned norms. This is why those from marginalized groups are so often denied credit as knowledge claimants (McConkey, 2004). By teaching students to question these norms, social justice leaders promote a more equal environment for their students, and help make the societal changes necessary to end epistemic, societal injustices.

Challenging the status quo. Social justice leadership involves advocating for social justice by questioning unjust norms (Theoharis, 2008). This means a social justice leader challenges the unjust status quo exacerbating epistemic injustice (Bogotch, 2000). Social justice leaders publically denounce programs which continue injustices in their schools, creating an inequitable environment for their students. This can be difficult for leaders, because many accepted programs designed to help marginalized students may actually result in their continued marginalization (Shields, 2004). Critical race theorists postulate dominant white male culture created this status quo (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Epistemic injustice occurs when we accept

this status quo and when those in power continue to implement programs exacerbating this privilege, with or without being aware (McConkey, 2004)

It is the job of a leader is to actively challenge this unjust status quo (Bogotch, 2000; Theoharis, 2008). It is not enough to simply say they strive for equity, but they should actively fight for it. This means social justice leaders are aware of epistemic injustices exacerbated by school programs, and work to actively fight against it. Leaders may do this by standing up for injustices they see occurring in their building, vocally empowering students to celebrate their diversity, or vocally reforming measures promulgating epistemic injustice and the dominance of the majority class.

Social justice leadership is more than closing an achievement gap, because ending inequality is much more complex than simply raising test scores (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Recognizing there is a gap between the performance of minority and majority students shows inequality exists; but it does little to promote behaviors to fix it (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2007). When socially just leaders give minority students a voice, teach social justice, and challenge unjust norms, they are engaging in behaviors that can make a difference.

Epistemic Injustice

Defining Epistemic Injustice

Epistemic injustice occurs when society accepts a status quo where those in power continue to implement norms exacerbating their privilege by denying those in marginalized groups' credit as equal knowledge claimants (Fricker, 1998; McConkey, 2004). Epistemic injustice is a societal injustice promoting unjust power dynamics to remain the same. Epistemic injustice occurs due to both willful ignorance and unconscious societal norms (Fricker, 2007; Frank, 2013; Pohlhaus, 2012). Fricker (2007) describes two types of epistemic injustice:

testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. Testimonial injustice occurs when the

information attained from a "knower" is deemed untrustworthy, or unimportant, because they

have been labeled as "incompetent" by the society (Frank, 2013). Hermeneutical injustice

occurs when those in marginalized groups are unable to make sense of their experiences because

of the lack of socially available epistemic resources (Frank, 2013). The concerns of the

marginalized are not understood, or taken seriously by the majority because they deem these

different experiences unimportant (Frank, 2013). Pohlhaus (2012) expands on Fricker's concept

of hermeneutical injustice by adding a willful component on the part of those in the majority.

She argues those in the dominant group willfully cause this injustice because those in the

dominant group are unwilling to try to understand the world from the perspective of those in

minority groups (Pohlhaus, 2012). This allows those in majority groups to maintain their

ignorance about an unjust society, allowing them to justify the status quo as it is; thus giving

them comfort their dominance is right and just (Liviatan & Jost, 2011).

Knowledge Claimants

Despite Constitutional Amendments guaranteeing equal rights to all Americans,

regardless of race, there is still a culture of epistemic injustice in the United States (McConkey,

2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Epistemic injustice occurs when traditionally marginalized

groups are discriminated against by being denied acknowledgement as credible knowledge

claimants (Fricker, 1998; McConkey, 2004). "Knowledge is highly prized in our society, partly

because of its instrumental use: it helps us achieve things we need or want" (McConkey, 2004 p.

199). Those who are seen as credible knowledge claimants are seen as figures of authority and

have more power in society (McConkey, 2004; Fricker, 1998). Those who do not have this

authority lack the ability to engage in what Lorraine Code (1995) calls "rhetorical spaces" (as

cited in McConkey, 2004). Code's rhetorical spaces are metaphorical places where norms, values, and beliefs are accepted or rejected (1995). When minority groups are denied access to these rhetorical spaces, the result is a continuation of norms and values promoting majority groups and discriminating against the minority groups.

Liviatan & Jost (2011) argue when those in the majority group are the ones who have the ability to define the accepted "status quo," they will continue to support norms exacerbating social injustices; whether they mean to or not. Jost and Banji (1994) called this "…system justification theory, which holds that individuals are motivated (at least in part) to rationalize the status quo, that is to defend, bolster, and justify the social, economic, and political arrangements that affect them" (as cited in Liviatan & Jost, 2011, p. 231). When traditionally marginalized groups are denied recognition as credible knowledge claimants, it paves the way for socially unjust norms and traditions to continue.

Social justice can only be attained when those in traditionally marginalized groups are given credibility as knowledge claimants (Fricker, 1998). When someone is given respect as a "knowledge claimant," it means their opinions, ideas, and voices are respected and viewed as important to society (Fricker, 1998). By recognizing the voices of traditionally marginalized groups, validating the experiences of these groups, and fighting for social justice, leaders confer credibility to marginalized students and their families, allowing them to enter into the role of knowledge claimant in rhetorical spaces. When all students are given the right to be recognized and respected as knowledge claimants, they become active agents in their learning. Social justice in schools can only be achieved when minority students are accepted as credible knowledge claimants.

Rhetorical Spaces

Being accepted as a credible knowledge claimant gives people access to "rhetorical spaces." Rhetorical spaces are metaphorical places where norms, values, and beliefs are accepted or rejected (Code, 1995). They are "fictive but not fanciful or fixed location whose… territorial imperatives structure and limit the kinds of utterances that can be voiced within them with a reasonable expectation of uptake and choral support" (Code, 1995, p. ix). Code argues it is in these spaces where a person is either granted or denied acceptance of a respected knower (Code, 1995). Although the theory was first applied to better explain how a male dominated society structurally oppresses the voices of women, the concepts have also been applied to social justice to understand the dynamics between minority and majority racial groups (McConkey, 2004).

It may appear anyone has the ability to be accepted as a credible "knower" in these rhetorical spaces, however there are subjective criteria one must meet, determined by those who already have the acceptance of the majority (Code, 1995; Fricker, 1998; McConkey, 2004). It is in these rhetorical spaces where a person's knowledge is given credit as "truth" or denied as "false" (Code, 1995). These spaces are legitimized by the accepted values and norms adopted by the majority it society (Code, 1995, McConkey, 2004). The credibility granted to one speaking in these rhetorical spaces will be based on their accepted position and power within the society at large (Code, 1995). It is here where those in minority groups face being denied credibility due to their status as being in the minority (Fricker, 2007). The chance of them being denied credibility as knowers is increased when their knowledge runs counter to the knowledge accepted by the society at large (Delgado, 1989).

Entry into rhetorical spaces is rarely based on a person's actual knowledge, and more commonly based on how well a person's knowledge fits into the dominant group. Stereotypical understandings of groups play a large role in determining if a person will be accepted as a knower in the rhetorical space (Code, 1995; McConkey, 2004). These types of beliefs about a person's knowledge are supported and maintained by dominant narratives (Code, 1995); meant to legitimize the status of those already in power while continuing to oppress the minority (Delgado, 1989).

Critical Race Theory

Defining Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory (CRT) was first used to explain injustices in the legal field (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). It was presented by Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman to explain the impact of epistemic racism in the field of law in the 1970's (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). They believed many of the racial reforms of the Civil Rights Movements of the 1960's had slowed, and sought to find a new way to understand the deeply entrenched racism in American culture (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Tate, 1997). CRT proposes racism has become a normalized part of our society (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The United States was built on the values of white males, and their values continue to permeate through modern policies and procedures (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The result being the passage of policies continually protecting the dominance of white males; even when those policies are designed to promote equity and justice for those who have been traditionally oppressed.

Critical race theory has its roots in critical theory. Critical theory began in the Frankfurt School after WWI (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). Scholars like Horkheimer, Adoro, and Marcuse began to question accepted societal notions, like capitalism, after experiencing the

economic hardships and injustices in Germany after WWI (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002).

Although it did not begin as a theory as much as a conversation, the theory grew when the men

fled Germany after the Nazi's took over (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). They sought refuge in

the United States, and their reasoning influenced the research taking place there (Kincheloe &

McLaren, 2002).

Today, critical theory takes on many different meanings. However, at the heart it is a

theory questioning democratic and free assumptions taken for granted in societies like the United

States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and in Europe (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002). Critical

theory "… is concerned in particular with issues of power and justice and the ways that the

economy; matters of race, class, and gender; ideologies; discourse; education; religion and other

social institutions; and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system" (Kincheloe &

McLaren, 2002, p. 90). Critical race theorists question the race relations and social dynamics

accepted as status quo.

Critical race theory began as a theory of law (Tate, 1997). Dr. Derrick Bell, a Harvard

Law Professor, and Dr. Richard Delgado fine-tuned the theory; drawing from critical legal

studies (CLS) (Tate, 1997). White (1972) explains CLS arose during the 1970's in response to

dissatisfaction with traditional legal ideas the law is the product of finite pre-determined rules (as

cited in Tate, 1997). CLS scholars recognized how traditional legal systems were working to

continually oppress and pacify those already in oppressed minority groups (Tate, 1997). CRT

scholars, like Delgado, did not think CLS went far enough to fight against oppression, and

believed some of the tenets even worked to further oppress members of minority groups.

Crenshaw (1988) argued CLS failed to address the realities of those being racially oppressed,

failed to address the role dominant classes played in enduring racist systems, and minimized how

transformative a liberal study of race could be (as cited in Tate, 1997, p. 229-230). CRT arose to fill those gaps in reasoning (Tate, 1997).

Premises of Critical Race Theory

Critically race theory is grounded in three major premises or insights. The first being racism is a normal occurrence, and therefore appears to be a normal way of life for those in the dominant culture (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Those in the dominant group do not recognize racism as a problem, and resist the notion racism is still an oppressing factor in the United States (Matias 2013; Matias, 2015). The idea of structural determinism is humans construct their own realities based on their language and understanding (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Race is not a biological difference between people; it has been socially constructed by the majority and accepted as truth (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). It has developed as a way to justify the continued oppression of those in minority groups and supports the dominance of those in the majority groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). By accepting this, those in the majority accept race as a normal part of society as a whole (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

The second premise of CRT is the importance of storytelling and counter-story telling (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Delgado (1989) suggested many aspects of reality are socially constructed (as cited in Ladson-Billings, 1988). By seeking out stories and counter-stories of those in minority groups, researchers are able to break current accepted myths and inaccuracies accepted as truth, and build new counter realities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). Searching out stories from those who have been traditionally marginalized allows members of those groups the ability to name their own realities, and debunk myths promulgated by those in the majority (Ladson-Billings, 1988).

The final tenant of CRT is called interest convergence. This is the idea whites in the dominant majority group will support racial advances, and programs promoting equity, as long as they also promote white self-interest (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). I will give space in this section to explain each of the premises in greater detail, in order to later describe how the premises of CRT can be used to understand the climate social justice beliefs and practices are formed in.

Structural determinism – Racism as the status quo. Structural determinism is the theory humans construct their own realities based on their language and understandings (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Delgado, 1989). Race is not a biological difference between people; it has been socially constructed by the majority and accepted as truth (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). By accepting this, those in the majority accept race as a normal part of society as a whole, and do not question its legitimacy (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

When race and racism are accepted as a normal occurrence, they become a normal and accepted way of life for those in the dominant culture (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Tate, 1997). This results in the failure of the majority group to admit racism and oppression are still rampant and need to be fought, exacerbating an unjust status quo (Tate, 1997). Racism is so deeply engrained into the culture and values of the United States few in the dominant class even know to question it (Tate, 1997; King, 1991). This type of thinking is the result of an unwillingness of the white majority to admit traditional, highly accepted power structures are still working to keep those in minority groups oppressed (King, 1991). This occurs because any challenge to the current status quo would require those in the dominant group to question their own deeply held beliefs and personal identities when it comes to race and racism (King, 1991). Before real change can occur, those in the dominant groups must question their own identities and beliefs

and be able to admit the role they play in benefitting from their privilege of being in the

dominant, white middle class (Matias, 2013).

A history of racism in the United States has created a set of norms promoting white

middle class values and culture as standards all other races are measured (Tate, 1997). When

those in other races fail to meet white standards, they are judged as inferior (Tate, 1997). If

those in minority groups fail, the role of race as a contributing factor becomes viewed as

extraneous, and the focus is instead centered on inability, inferiority, or failure to work hard

enough (Tate, 1997). Those in the dominant group believe everyone should be able to live up to

the same standards if they work hard enough (Tate, 1997). By not recognizing the social factors

barring the way of those in minority groups, white middle class Americans promulgate the idea

members of minority groups fail because of innate inferiority.

Racial stereotypes become ingrained in the culture and values influencing the creation

and implementation of policy (Tate, 1997). It creates an idea where those in minority groups are

inferior and therefore policies created must address this personal inability, rather than addressing

the racist climate continuing to oppress those in minority groups (Tate, 1997). Laws and policies

created in climates where the traditions of the dominant Western traditions are accepted as the

norm fail to address the real issues about race, and instead preserve and replicate an oppressive

status quo (Delgado & Stefancic, 1989).

When whiteness becomes the standard all other groups are compared, it becomes a

property right only a select few have access to (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Race is a defining

factor in the United States. It was once used as a way to determine who was worthy of being

accepted as an immigrant in to the United States (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), or to vote.

Today, race is still a permanent fixture on application, surveys, standardized tests, etc. Although

race is a socially constructed concept (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995), it continues to be used as a way to "other" people (Gillborn, 2005). Whiteness has, historically, become a commodity; used a means or a barrier to access certain civil rights, ownership rights, and freedoms (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Those who have access to this "property" become the standard all others are compared to.

Counter-storytelling. Central to CRT is the importance of counter-story telling, or "naming one's own reality" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Tate, 1997). Counter-storytelling occurs when those who have been traditionally marginalized tell their stories, and reveal their truths (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). This action is important because it allows those who have been traditionally silenced to have their voices heard. Counter-storytelling builds community and consensus amongst those in minority oppressed groups, and strengthen resistance to those in the majority (Aleman & Aleman, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The practice acts as a way to deconstruct the status quo by exposing myths accepted and reproduced by those in majority groups, who have difficulties understanding and accepting what it is like to be outside of the dominant white middle class (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

The way a problem is defined influences the types of policies created and implemented to address it (Tate, 1997). Those who have the most power are the ones who get to frame what problems are import enough to be dealt with through the creation of policy (Fowler, 2013). Those who have the voice are the ones who get to set the policies addressing the problem, based on their values, beliefs, and understandings (Fowler, 2013). The problem, is those who are considered to be in the majority are typically the ones who have the power and the voice to frame policies addressing race and racism. Because these voices rarely include those in minority

groups, policies continue to reflect the needs and values of those in majority groups, rather than those in groups who are being most affected.

Recognizing the voices of those in traditionally marginalized groups is one way to halt the continuation of an unjust status quo, dominated by the voices of those in the majority (Delgado, 1989). Because reality is socially constructed (Delgado, 1989; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), stories have the power to change one's understanding of their own realities. Those in majority groups use stories, and their understanding of history, to legitimize and justify systems of oppression (Delgado, 1989). Those in minority groups who accept this reality may blame themselves for their oppressed position (Delgado, 1989). However, by telling their counter-stories about their own experiences, those in minority groups have a chance to legitimize their own experiences, running counter to those accepted as the status quo (Delgado, 1989).

The practice of counter-storytelling increases the chances unjust structures may be changed. When members of oppressing majority groups listen to counter-stories, there is a greater chance they will adjust their own understandings of reality to realize there is an existence of racist and oppressive structures which continue to marginalize those in minority groups (Delgado, 1989). By telling these stories, those in minority groups are able to legitimize their power and position in society, and change the mindsets of their oppressors (Tate, 1997). When the stories of the oppressed are accepted as reality, there is a chance structural change can be made, as they will begin to be seen and accepted as credible knowers (McConkey, 2004; Fricker, 1988).

Interest convergence. A third premise of CRT, according to Delgado and Stefancic (2000), is the idea of interest convergence. Interest convergence occurs when whites in the dominant majority group support racial advances, and programs promoting equity, as long as

they also promote white self-interest (Bell, 1980; Aleman & Aleman, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). When the interests of both minority and majority classes converge, policies to advance those in the minority groups will be accepted (Bell, 1980). If a program or policy threatens the superiority of the dominant white middle class however, it will not be accepted as legitimate (Bell, 1980). Although interest convergence can result in the implementation of policies appearing to promote social justice, justice cannot be achieved while the dominant white middle class continues to benefit from privileges granted to them through the subordination of minority classes (Bell, 1980).

Bell (1992) argued African Americans would never be fully accepted as equal citizens to white Americans, due to the results of interest convergence (as cited in Aleman & Aleman, 2010). His theory of racial realism suggests African Americans can only find solutions to end their subordination if they accept their subordinate status is permanent; in other words, if they act as realists (Bell, 1992). Bell postulates once this reality is accepted, African Americans will have the freedom to deduce new strategies, outside of the political norm, to end injustices (1992).

One example of the result of interest convergence and school equity is the policy tying the achievement of educational standards to federal financing (Tate, 1997). When schools perform well on standardized assessments they receive federal money, while failing schools are sanctioned. This practice is billed as a way to improve equality in schools. However, it does not address the needs of those in minority groups; instead it benefits already successful schools. The policy, which should promote equity results in continued oppression for those who the policy was intended to benefit, as failing schools are sanctioned rather than helped. This policy moves the dialogue away from students who are underserved and instead focuses on a conversation about applying equally high standards for all students (Tate, 1997). The dominant groups

accepts these policies because they continue to benefit from them, protecting their status and dominance over the groups the policies claim they are intended to help.

Critical Race Theory and Education

Educational theorist have applied CRT to explain continued injustices in the field of education (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Gillborn, 2006; Jay, 2003). These scholars analyze school-wide programs through the lens of CRT to understand why there is still a gap between traditionally marginalized and majority students' test scores. Although the concept was originally designed to explain inequalities in the field of law (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012), CRT can also be used to explain gaps between minority and majority students in schools (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Educational scholars focus on the concept of property when applying CRT to education. In the United States, property ownership has been synonymous with democratic rights (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Therefore, those who have access to property, have a greater say in policy in the United States. While education may not be an example of physical property, it is an example of intellectual property, which gives those who have access to it increased abilities to participate in democracy (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Applying this concept to education can explain why there continues to be inequalities between minority and majority students in the United States.

Intellectual property refers to the type of curriculum and knowledge students have access to in their schools (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The amount of knowledge a person has, or is perceived to have, impacts the credibility they are given by others (Fricker, 1998; McConkey, 2004). Therefore, intellectual property becomes an increasingly important commodity to have if a person is to be seen as having credibility. Although it is often unintentional, students in

traditionally marginalized groups rarely have the same access to intellectual property as those in

majority groups (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Gillborn, 2005). This could be due to limited

funding of schools serving predominantly minority populations, or due to tracking systems

disproportionately assigning minority students to lower level classes (Ladson-Billings & Tate,

1995; Ladson-Billings, 2006). Regardless of the reasons why minority students tend to have less

access to intellectual property, the result is the exacerbation of a system maintaining a divide

between the power and equity of white and black students (Gillborn, 2005).

Critical Race Theory and Equity Standards in Education

Addressing equity differences between students in minority and majority groups has been a

reform goal of the past few administrations of the federal government (NCLB, 2002; ESSA,

2015). The primary way equity is assessed in schools is through the use of standardized

assessments, and the measurement of the achievement gap between students' test scores (ESSA,

2015; Gillborn, 2006; Mirci, Loomis, & Hensley, 2011). However, this practice unintentionally

does more harm than good for students already in marginalized groups when assessed by CRT

theorists (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Gillborn, 2005). Proponents of CRT argue many programs

designed to promote equity actually stifle it because they are created in an environment

unintentionally promoting "white" values (Gillborn, 2005; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2004;

Ladson-Billings, 1998; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011, Bell, 1980). The use of standardized

assessments as accountability tools exacerbate norms, possibly promoting oppression for

marginalized groups, as they are based on theories of learning derived from research

predominately studying students from the white dominant culture (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2011).

Using student test scores as a measure for equity may cause leaders to focus on the end

results, rather than focusing on the environment education is occurring (Au, 2013; Shepard,

2016). Standardized assessments do not put the focus on higher-level skills or curriculum (Au, 2013; Au, 2009). Instead, teachers may focus on lower-level assessed skills, and fail to expand curriculum to higher-order curriculum (Au 2009; Au, 2013). Educational leaders who are measured by student test scores will be more likely to focus on teaching students to the test. This especially happens to students who are already struggling with the material (Shepard, 1991). These students end up in classes focusing strictly on tested content, and fail to expand past it (Shepard, 1991). These classes tend to be overrepresented by students in traditionally marginalized groups (Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, & Koschoreck, 2001). Therefore, this type of system continues to give intellectual property access to students who are already part of the majority group, and denies it to those in the minority. Epistemic injustice is continued when those in minority groups are not accepted as credible knowledge claimants (McConkey, 2004; Fricker, 1998). By denying students' access to knowledge, schools aiming to help minority students perform better on assessments may actually be exacerbating the system of societal inequalities.

Framework

In this final section of my literature review I will discuss the framework I used to frame the findings of my study. The purpose of this study was to understand, within the context of the accountability climate, school leaders' espoused beliefs about social justice and the practices they employ to those ends. Utilizing the above concepts of social justice leadership, I used portions of the theories of epistemic injustice and critical race theory to understand how the current climate impacts a leaders' espoused beliefs and practices about social justice. I combined these two lens in my framework because I saw an overlap in how they relate to one another. Theories of epistemic injustice analyze the injustices ingrained in our culture, and shed

light on the role power and privilege play in the continuation of injustice (Liviatan & Jost, 2011).

Critical race theory then calls on us to question the role white racial dominance plays in the

exacerbation in these injustices, demonstrating the need for leaders to focus on equity to address

issues of both power and privilege (Brown, 2004). Figure 4 shows a graphic representation of

my framework.

Figure 4. Framework. This figure illustrates the framework for the study
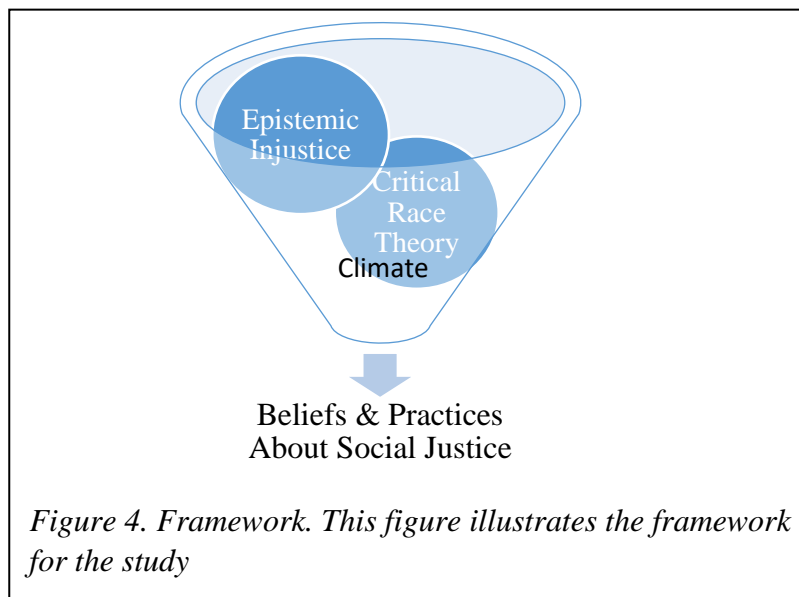
Although using a dual lens to frame my study is complex, it was necessary because the

study of social justice is complex. Understanding the motivations behind a school leader's

beliefs and practices requires an understanding of the social world they practice in. Using the

theories of epistemic injustice and critical race theory as lenses to view the climate leaders'

beliefs and practices are formed in allowed me to better analyze and understand it. Barriers to

social justice can be hard to identify because racial differences have become an accepted norm

(Matias & Zembylas, 2014; Mirci, Loomis, & Hensley, 201; Gillborn, 2006). These two lenses

assisted in the ability to uncover if barriers exist blocking leaders from successful social justice

leadership. For a school leader to be a successful social justice leader they must be aware current

equity policies have been formed in a climate characterized by epistemic inequities (Theoharis,

2007). These policies are evaluated with tools historically used to bolster discrimination and

oppression of minority groups (Au, 2013). If leaders cannot challenge this status quo, the

question arises if they truly are social justice leaders (Bogotch, 2000; Theoharis, 2007). Using

these lenses will gave me a clearer picture of the current climate, to uncover if epistemic

injustices subconsciously played a role in the formation of leadership practices. In the next

section of literature review, I will explain how I used each lens to better understand social justice

leadership.

Epistemic Injustice and Social Justice Leadership

Epistemic injustice occurs when society accepts a status quo in which those in power

continue to implement norms exacerbating their privilege by denying those in marginalized

groups' credit as equal knowledge claimants (Fricker, 1998; McConkey, 2004). Social justice

leaders ensure they have implemented practices in their schools to promote an equitable

environment for all of their students (Bogotch, 2000; Theoharis, 2007). When an educational

leader engages in activities promoting social justice, they are promoting the credibility of

minority students as knowledge claimants (McConkey, 2004; Fricker 1998), thus challenging

traditional epistemic injustices. By giving these students and their families a voice in their

education, leaders allow them to enter into Code's (1995) coveted rhetorical spaces. When

leaders support teacher initiative to "teach" social justice, they validate minority students lived

experiences (Shields, 2004), once again acknowledging the voice too often silenced due to

epistemic injustices (Fricker, 1998; McConkey, 2004, Delpit, 1988; Bell, 1989). Finally, when

social justice leaders fight against the unjust status quo, they are taking the most vital step to

promoting equity both inside and outside of the school house, once again challenging ingrained epistemic injustices (Bogotch, 2000).

To end epistemic injustice leaders must promote acceptance of minority students as credible knowledge claimants (Fricker, 1998; McConkey, 2004). They can do this by being social justice leaders. Measuring the achievement gap, however reports inequities exist, yet fails to promote behaviors to end it (Gillborn, 2006). Using standardized assessment examinations as an assessment of social justice leadership may in-fact hurt minority students' acceptance as credible knowledge claimants, because it limits their access to knowledge. The best way to end epistemic injustice is to challenge the status quo continually stripping those in minority groups of their value as credible knowers (Fricker, 1988; McConkey, 2004; Frank, 2013). Social justice leaders who understand what epistemic injustice is will better be able to fight it as social justice leaders. I applied this lens to my research to deduce if school leaders' beliefs and actions around equity broke this cycle of epistemic injustice or if they were influenced by it.

Critical Race Theory and Social Justice Leadership

CRT can be used to understand what is causing the epistemic injustice social justice leaders must challenge. There remains epistemic injustices in schools because white majority values are still used to design tools to evaluate if leaders are being equitable. Standardized evaluations are the current tools used to measure equity in schools (ESSA, 2016). These tools are designed after IQ test models of the past (Au, 2013; Shepard, 2000). The original use of these tools were to continue to oppress those in the minority groups and promote those in majority groups (Au, 2013). Understanding how to end injustices in schools requires social justice leaders to first understand where they are originating from. It is only then social justice leaders can begin to promote true equity in their schools.

CRT also focuses on the importance of counter-narratives of those who have been traditionally marginalized (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Socially just leaders need to include those who have been traditionally marginalized in conversations about equity. By leaving their voices out of the conversation, leaders are quietly denying students credibility as knowledge claimants (McConkey, 2004); and continuing to oppress them with racial subordination (Hayes and Juarez, 2012). Without being critical of their own practices, leaders will fail to truly promote social justice and equity, regardless of their intentions (Hayes & Juarez, 2012).

Using the Frame

The purpose of this study was to understand, within the context of the accountability climate, school leaders' espoused beliefs about social justice and the practices they employ to those ends. I used the dual lenses of epistemic injustice and critical race theory to better understand the climate leaders' beliefs and practices were formed. Environmental factors creating barriers to social justice can be invisible upon a tertiary glance, as many of them are structural, and simply accepted as norms (Matias & Zembylas, 2014; Mirci, Loomis, & Hensley, 2011; Gillborn, 2006). Using these two lenses together allowed me to scrutinize the environment and see beyond the surface to understand the deeply ingrained structures informing leaders' beliefs and practices about social justice. This framework allowed me to analyze data collected through fieldwork observations and interviews with leaders from six different school divisions in Southeastern, Virginia.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Methodology

The phenomenon I sought to understand is not well understood or defined in the current research. Therefore, my study was inductive in nature (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). While deductive studies focus on refining and elaborating on existing ideas, inductive studies focus on the development of new concepts and the building of original theories (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013; Thomas, 2006). The goal of inductive research is to "derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data…" (Thomas, 2006, p. 238), not well understood or established in current literature. Utilizing this approach allowed me to generate a new understanding about the way school leaders construct knowledge about social justice in the context of increased equity standards.

Inductive research is a naturalistic approach to gathering and analyzing data. Naturalistic paradigms exist when and inquirer seeks to understand their research in the natural world (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Unlike rational inquiry, natural inquiry is used when a researcher seeks to understand how people in the natural world construct their realities and interact within those constructed realities (Guba, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Through my research, I gained insights into the way my participants understand social justice leadership and what influenced the construction of those beliefs. Naturalistic inquiry is not a method, but a paradigm of research (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). For this research study, I used qualitative methods to explore the phenomena of social justice.

Qualitative research methods best fit the goals of my study as they support the goals naturalistic inquiry (Guba, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Bogdan & Biklen (2007) have suggested qualitative research is beneficial when a researcher wants to collect rich, descriptive,

textual data; all parts of naturalistic inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). This data allows researchers to better understand the meanings participants make about their lives and experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). This type of data cannot be measured using quantitative methods, because humans construct their own social realities (Onwuegbuzie, 2002; Guba & Lincoln, 1982). The only way to measure the way a participant understands their world is through the use of qualitative methods (Onwuegbuzie, 2002; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1982). For this study, I wished to understand how the environment impacted leaders' espoused beliefs about social justice. Qualitative research allowed me to better understand leaders' beliefs and how they developed. Researchers, such as Charmaz (2008) and Mayan & Daum (2016) suggest using qualitative methods when studying social justice.

Inductive qualitative research methods allow the researcher to examine how and why a phenomena happens (Thomas, 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Charmaz, 2008; Mayan & Daum, 2016). It calls for the researcher to go beyond description to uncover how or why a phenomena occurs (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Charmaz, 2008). Using this method, social justice researchers can do more than simply state injustices exist, and can begin to make declarations as to what conditions allow injustices to develop, continue, or end (Charmaz, 2008). Qualitative researchers are able to naturally study social justice because this type of research address issues in a personal way (Mayan & Daum, 2016). My research examined how social justice standards impact a leader's espoused beliefs and actions for social justice leadership. Using qualitative research, I was able to uncover how my participants made sense of social justice through the context of their environment.

In order to gather data, my methods were informed by the case study method. Case studies are a "…detailed investigation of one or more organizations, or groups within organizations, with a view to providing an analysis of the context and processes involved in the phenomenon under study (Meyer, 2001, p. 329). Case studies allow researchers to use a variety of data collection methods to best understand a phenomena in a certain context (Baxter & Jacks, 2008; Stake, 1995; Hartley, 2004). Hartley (2004) further argues case studies are particularly useful when the phenomenon under study is new or has been studied in a limited capacity (as cited in Meyer, 2001), as they answer questions about how and why certain things occur. The impact social justice standards have on leaders' espoused beliefs and practices about social justice has not been studied in great detail, therefore a design informed by case studies allowed me to gather different perspectives to frame an emerging theory. My research was informed by a case study as I analyzed the social practices and policies from seven school leaders in Southeastern, Virginia.

When completing a case study, researchers rely on interviews, observations, and document analysis to gather their data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Stake, 1995; Hartley, 2004). I conducted research informed by the structure of an instrumental case study, which allows the researcher to make comparisons about a specific phenomenon across multiple cases (Stake, 1995). Throughout my study, I compared how different leaders understand social justice in different contexts. A mulit-case study allows researchers to "…study two or more subjects, settings, or depositories…" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007 p. 69). They are useful when conducting instrumental case studies (Stake, 1995; Stake, 2006), because they allow the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of an issue across contexts (Stake, 2006). Eisenhardt (1989) suggests single case studies may be limited because it is nearly impossible to generalize the findings from

a single case (as cited in Meyer, 2001). By using design influenced by multi-case study design, I was able to gather richer descriptions of the context of the phenomena under study, increasing the level of transferability of my data (Meyer, 2001; Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Use multiple cases also increased the level of external validity of my study and protected against observer biases, according to Miles & Huberman (1994), (as cited in Meyer, 2001), as I was able to triangulate my findings in multiple different contexts. Through the course of my study, I analyzed how a leader's understanding of social justice leadership forms in different settings. A multi-case approach allowed me to understand the perspectives of leaders from a variety of different contexts.

Interviews and observations are two primary methods employed to gather data in a case study (Stake, 1995; Hartley, 2004). Although they are different qualitative methods, Lofland (1971) "…pointed out, the two go hand in hand…" (as cited in Fontana & Frey, 2008, p. 129). I interviewed and observed seven different leaders from six different school divisions in Southeaster Virginia. I conducted either two or three interviews with each participant, lasting between 30 minutes and one hour, over a five month period. Observations were conducted after the interviews to corroborate information obtained in the interviews, and as a way to stimulate new interview questions (Hartley, 2004). Although I had planned to observe data meetings at each of my participants' schools, I was only able to see three. Some of the participants did not believe they had meetings centered on the analysis of equity data. Other participants knew of such meetings, but they occurred at the district level. Therefore, they would have been outside of the scope of my research, as school leaders had no input in the sessions. Finally, other leaders told me I would have to get in contact with lead teachers, who control these types of meetings, and those contacts did not return my request.

Interviews

Throughout the course of this study I sought to understand how the current context, marked by a high emphasis on school accountability, impacted a leader's espoused beliefs about what it means to be a social justice leader. I conducted both unstructured interviews and observations to gather data (Hartley, 2004). The interview technique is useful because it allows the researcher to "…gather descriptive data in subjects' own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007 p. 103). Unstructured interviews are made up of open-ended questions, written in an interview schedule (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Fontana & Frey, 2008). The researcher does not have to strictly stick to the schedule, and allows the answers from the participant to steer the direction of the interview (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Open-ended interview questions allow participants to elaborate and fully explain each of their answers in detail (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Fontana & Frey, 2008). Using an interview schedule permits the researcher to gather comparable data across subjects because it keeps the interviews focused on similar discussion topics (Bogdan & Biklen 2007). When conducting an interview, researchers must be sure to develop positive rapport with their subjects to make them feel comfortable (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This puts subjects at ease and increase the likelihood participants are honest and candid in their answers (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Observations

Interviews can be used with participant observations in order to gather significant data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Fontana & Frey, 2008). I utilized observations along with my interviews in order to better understand the phenomena I studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, Fontana & Frey 2008; Angrosino, 2005). Observations are particularly useful tools when

conducting naturalistic research because they permit researchers to take "…into account the field context from which so much … presumed 'data' are said to emerge" (Angrosino, 2005, p. 163). Making observations in addition to interviewing my participants allowed me to gain a better understanding of the context my participants lived and worked in. I could not fully understand their constructed realities without understanding the context they have been formed in. Conducting observations allowed me to gain this deeper insight.

When conducting observations in a case study, researchers center on a specific part of an organization to focus their efforts, based on their research question (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). For the purpose of this study, I focused on a specific activity, namely social justice activities. I observed meetings centered on strategies to promote social justice in schools. By observing naturally occurring meetings, I was able to observe my participants in their natural setting (Angrosino, 2005), increasing the chance of seeing how they approached social justice on a typical day. For example, I observed data meetings and recorded the focus of the meetings, what types of data the administration team analyzed, and what strategies they used based on the data for their school. I will determined when to conduct these observations based on interview data.

Although I had planned to observe data meetings at each of my participants' schools, I was only able to see three. Some of the participants did not believe they had meetings centered on the analysis of equity data. Other participants knew of such meetings, but they occurred at the district level. Therefore, they would have been outside of the scope of my research, as school leaders had no input in the sessions. Finally, other leaders told me I would have to get in contact with lead teachers, who control these types of meetings, and those contacts did not return my request.

Triangulation

Proponents of quantitative research worry results gained from qualitative studies may be biased or untruthful (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013; Guba & Lincoln, 1982). However, Guba and Lincoln (1981; 1982), postulate strategies for qualitative researchers to utilize to strengthen the validity of their findings. One such strategy is through the use of triangulation (Guba, 1981; Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Using both interviews and observations to gather data in my study allowed me to triangulate my data (Meyer, 2001). Because of the subjective nature of qualitative research, there is a high chance I could have misinterpreted the data in my analysis (Stake, 1995, Guba & Lincoln, 1982). By using two different methods to gather data, I increased the chances my interpretations were correct, and I did not make incorrect assumptions (Stake, 1995; Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Throughout my study I further engaged in in member-checking, allowing participants to confirm particular findings (Stake, 1995; Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Meyer, 2001). Member checking was integrated into my data collection process in the form of later interview questions.

Participant Selection

The first step in the participant selection process is identifying a parent population to draw a sample from (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). The parent population for this study was educational leaders from Southeastern Virginia, with secondary school leadership experience; who had at least three years of leadership experiences. This parent population was purposefully selected. A purposive sample is chosen when the researcher chooses participants based on specific characteristics meaningful to their study (Stake, 2006). It is used when a researcher wants their sample to "…represent a location or type in relation to a key criterion" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 79). Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling. A researcher conducts non-

probability sampling when they want their sample to "…reflect particular features of or groups within the sampled population" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 78). This sample was not meant to be representative of an entire population, but to reflect certain characteristics important to my research question.

For this study, I included leaders who had at least three years of leadership experience. This ensured leader's practices and procedures to promote social justice had already been established. It also made it more likely their practices were a result of their beliefs, and not informed by a previous leader. These leaders strove to lead a socially just and equitable school. Participants all had secondary school leadership experience to avoid confounding variables based on the culture found in different levels of schools. Although two participants were currently leaders in elementary schools, this was their first year in that position. They had previously taught and served as school leaders in secondary schools for multiple years. Participants were drawn from schools with varying student populations and demographics be representative of the populations of students being served in the state of Virginia. My participants were all school leaders in Southeastern Virginia because this location allowed me the easiest access; as it was where I was centered when conducting my research.

My sample consisted of seven school leaders from Southeastern Virginia, including both principals and assistant principals. Six men and one woman participated in my study. The leader with the least experience had served in leadership roles for three years, and the leader with the most experience had served over seventeen years in leadership roles. All participants had worked as a school principal at some point during their careers. Five participants had completed or were currently enrolled in doctoral programs for educational leadership. Five participants were leaders in accredited schools, according to the 2017 Virginia Standards of Accreditation.

Two leaders were in schools accredited with conditions. All participants' were assigned

pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. Participant profiles can be found in Table 3

Leader Profiles

PARTICIPANT	GENDER	RACE	YEARS IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS	EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	SCHOOL SETTING	CURRENT POSITION
MR. JOHN	Male	Black	Current: 1 Secondary:11 Elementary: 4	Doctorate	Department of Juvenile Justice	Program Administrator Division of Education
MR. WELLS	Male	White	Current: 5 Secondary: 8	Master's	High School	Principal
MR. NORTHAM	Male	White	Current: 10 Secondary: 11+	Master's	High School	Principal
MRS. WALLACE	Female	White	Current: 5 Secondary: 17	Working on Doctorate	High School	Co-Principal
MR. RILEY	Male	Black	Current: 4	Doctorate	High School	Assistant Principal
MR. SMITH	Male	Black	Current: 1 Secondary: 15+	Working on Doctorate	Elementary School	Assistant Principal
MR. SCOTT	Male	Black	Current: 1 Secondary: 2	Working on Doctorate	Elementary School	Principal

Table 2. Leader Profiles. Participant profiles based on gender, race, years in leadership, educational level, school setting, and current position

Instrumentation

Naturalistic research is based on the premise there is not a single reality (Guba &

Lincoln, 1982). There are multiple realities people construct based on their personal experiences

(Lincoln & Guba, 1982). Using qualitative methods, like interviews and observations, allow

researchers to come to know these realities (Bogdan & Biklen, 2000; Guba & Lincoln, 1982;

Fontana & Frey, 2008; Onwuegbuzie, 2002). In order to conduct my interviews I prepared an

interview schedule (Bogdan & Biklen, 2000). Because I conducted open-ended interviews, I

used the interview schedule to keep each interview focused on similar topics. I designed the

schedule using open-ended questions, giving me flexibility to allow the interview to flow

naturally (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Fontana & Frey, 2008). As topics or other questions arose

out of the interview, I had the ability to go "off script" as a result of using open-ended questions. However, if the interview strayed too far off topic, I was able to use the schedule to bring my interview back into the scope of my study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Using open ended questions in my interviews allowed me to gain a better understanding about the complex behaviors and experiences of my participants (Fontana & Frey, 2008; Meyer, 2001). These types of questions allowed them to explain how they constructed their understandings about social justice, and stopped me from imposing my beliefs on their understandings (Fontana & Frey, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Utilizing a schedule also helped me when it came time to compare my data. I interviewed multiple leaders in different settings to gain their differing perspectives (Stake, 1995; Meyer, 2001). Creating an interview schedule allowed me to be sure I discussed similar topics with each of my participants so I could compare their answers during my data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

During my interviews, I utilized a tape recorder to record each session (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Meyer, 2001). This allowed me to be present in the interview, rather than having to write during the interview sessions (Meyer, 2001). When a researcher continuously writes during an interview, they run a risk of creating an environment of distrust with their participants. Gaining trust is of vital importance when it comes to generating quality interviews (Fontana & Frey, 2008; Meyer, 2001). If participants do not feel comfortable in the interview setting there is a chance they will not give truthful answer to interview questions (Fontana & Frey, 2008); especially when discussing something as sensitive as social justice leadership. Although the use of a tape recorder allowed me to create a more natural setting for my participants, simply relying on a tape recording could cause a researcher to miss "…the sights, smells, impressions, and extra remarks said before and after the interview" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007 p. 119). Therefore, I also

discreetly took some notes about mannerisms, body language, or visual ques I notice while in the interview sessions (Meyer, 2001). After the completion of my interviews, I created transcripts to use during my data analysis. "Transcripts are the main data of many interview studies" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007 p. 129).

I used the data collected in my interviews to help structure my participant observations (Meyer, 2001; Fontana & Frey, 2008; Angrosino, 2005). After conducting my interviews, I determined what settings would be the most beneficial to observe. My goal was to observe data meetings to see how the conversation of social justice was incorporated into an analysis of school data. These observations allowed me to compare interview data with real-life daily occurrences of my participants. Pelto & Pelto (1978) suggest observations are a prime method to use for verification of other data (as cited in Angrosino, 2005, p. 162). Observations gave me the chance to "check" the truthfulness of my participant interview answers. They allowed me to see the context my participants "realities" had been created (Angrosino, 2005). During my observations, I kept an observational guide to ensure I took note of similar behaviors across all of my settings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This allowed me to compare my data more easily during my data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Throughout my interviews, I was able to discuss what I observed in my observations and gain clarification if needed. This allowed me to check to ensure I understood their behaviors in the same way the participants understood them (Angrosino, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1982; Meyer, 2001), and also served as a way to member check throughout my study.

Data Collection

Interviews

In order to collect my interview data I tape recorded my interview sessions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Meyer, 2001; Fontana & Frey, 2008). At the completion of each session, I transcribed my interviews to use during my data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Recording interview sessions allowed me to freely interact with my participants without having to write information down. This may have distracted the participant, or made them feel self-conscious during the session. I was transparent about the recorder being in the room. I first gained permission to record the interview, being sure to let my participant know I would not use their names, or any identifying characteristics in my final write-up (Bogdan & Biklen 2007); and I destroyed all recordings after transcripts were completed.

During my interviews I used an open-ended interview schedule, with guiding questions to keep me on track. However, due to the open-ended nature of the interview process, I allowed the conversation to be led by my participant. I created new questions based on the analysis of my earlier interviews.

Observations

While in the field, I completed jottings of my observations. Jottings are short notes or reminders the research makes while observing in the field (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). These "… jottings or scratch notes, abbreviated words and phrases are to use later to construct full fieldnotes" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011 p. 19). They include important words, phrases, or events the researcher wants to be sure to remember when they are writing their fieldnotes at the completion of the observation (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). A research takes short jottings while they conducting observations in order to stay present and focused on the

observation. If they spend too much time writing full fieldnotes, they may miss something

pertinent to their study. Avoiding writing full fieldnotes also permits the researcher to build a

relationship and trust amongst their participants (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). Participants

may begin to feel self-conscious if they notice the researcher taking copious notes while they are

being observed (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

After each observation session I turned my jottings into complete field notes (Emerson,

Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). Fieldnotes are written accounts of what the researcher observed while in

the field (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). Since it is important to record fieldnotes while the

memories of the observation are still fresh in the mind of the researcher (Emerson, Fretz, &

Shaw, 2011), I recorded my fieldnotes as soon as I returned from my observations. These field

notes were used during my data analysis. I was able to compare findings from my observations

to conclusions drawn in the interviews to gain a more holistic understanding of the phenomena

under study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Data Analysis

After transcribing my interview data and creating fieldnotes from my observational

jottings, I began the process of data analysis. Qualitative data is comprised of rich, textual data

(Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 1982). I analyzed my data using both an inductive

and deductive approach (Thomas, 2006). Both of these procedures required me to code my data

into categories I later developed into three emergent themes (Meyer, 2001). Coding

"…represents the operations by which data are broken down, conceptualized, and put back

together in new ways" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990 p. 57). Coding is a multi-step process. The

researcher first conducts open coding to discover common categories throughout the data

(Strauss & Corbin, 1990); axial coding is then conducted to discover how open coded categories fit together in common themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

I began my data analysis by using a general inductive approach. A general inductive approach to analysis is a "systematic procedure for analyzing qualitative data in which the analysis likely to be guided by specific evaluation objectives" (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). The goal is to "derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations made from the raw data…" (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). To complete this process I read, and re-read my transcripts in order to identify important themes, comments, or phrases from my interviews and observations (Meyer, 2001). I then created a set of in vivo categories, allowing my data to speak for itself. I named codes based on direct quotes of text or phrases from my raw data. This allowed me to summarize my raw data into common categories for further analysis (Thomas, 2006). Creating in vivo codes enhanced the ecological validity of my research, and helped to eliminate bias created when using a priori codes. Throughout this process I used both open and axial coding to make sense of my inductive categories. As new categories emerged, I wrote the text from my transcripts into a code book. I then categorized those codes using axial coding to create broader themes.

Open coding is "the process of breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing data" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990 p. 61). I analyzed my transcripts and fieldnotes, categorizing them into common themes. These categories were in vivo, as they were comprised of direct quotes from my text. While my analysis was guided by my research questions, focusing on social justice and equity beliefs and practices, I did not use any a priori theories to influence the way I coded and categorize my raw data. Creating initial categories with open coding

allowed me to compare my data and find commonalities and differences between the participants in my case study.

Axial coding is the second step in the coding process. Axial coding occurs when the researcher puts their data "…back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 96). During the process of axial coding, I discovered relationships between the categories I created during open coding. This allowed me to draw conclusions about the effects social justice evaluation standards has on the espoused beliefs and practices of school leaders. During this secondary process, I created models and diagrams to uncover how my initial open codes connect to one another (Thomas, 2006; Meyer, 2001). The process of axial coding allowed me to refine my initial categories into broader themes, condensing the number of codes I worked with (Thomas, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Categories related to one another were combined and refined to show a clear linkage.

After completing my inductive coding, I re-assessed my data using a deductive analysis. Deductive analysis occurs when the researcher determines if their data is "consistent with prior assumptions, theories, or hypothesis identified or constructed by the investigator" (Thomas, 2006, p. 238). A deductive analysis is influenced by a priori codes, created from the study of prior research on a topic. For my data analysis, I applied my dual lens of epistemic injustice and critical race theory to the themes derived through my inductive analysis. This allowed me to analyze the extent the themes derived from my in vivo codes were consistent with prior research into these topics (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Using the a priori codes also allowed me to draw conclusions about how the environment effects school leaders' espoused beliefs and practices about social justice, based on social justice theories.

The a priori lenses I used to analyze my inductive data included: fostering student voice, teaching social justice, fighting against an unjust status quo, themes of epistemic injustice, and evidence of conferral of credibility as knowledge claimants. I used themes found in critical race theory such as: interest convergence and structural determinism, in order to better analyze and understand the environments influencing the beliefs and practices of the leaders in my study.

Throughout my processes of coding I kept memos and diagrams detailing why I made certain categories as well as why and how those individual categories became greater themes. Memos are "written records of analysis related to the formulation of theory" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 197). I kept these records to record my thought processes as I created different codes and themes. I referred back to these memos throughout my process of analysis to remind myself what I felt was important, and of any emerging patterns or links I saw throughout the process of analysis. This allowed me to avoid bias as I analyzed my data by keeping track of the thought processes I went through when deducing my codes and themes (Guba & Lincoln, 1982).

Throughout my coding process I coded line-by-line. This means I read each line of my transcripts and coded for common phrases, thoughts, or ideas. As I created categories, I made notes in my codebook. This allowed me to easily combine them into like themes during my axial coding process. Once I categorized my codes, I was able to name the themes. During my inductive analysis I created in vivo themes, meaning I created them based on the direct quotes or phrases I found in my data. During my deductive coding, I created a priori themes using the theories' presented in my literature review.

During my coding process, I first analyzed the data within individual cases to draw individual conclusions from my data. I then compared my data across cases to determine if there

were similarities or differences (Meyer, 2001). This allowed me draw conclusions within

specific contexts, but also to compare different school leaders against one another.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to understand, within the context of the accountability climate, school leaders' espoused beliefs about social justice, and the practices they employ to those ends. In order to research this phenomena I conducted either two or three interviews with seven different school leaders in Southeastern Virginia, and observed data analysis meetings at their schools. Although I had planned to observe data meetings at each of my participants' schools, I was only able to see three. Some of the participants did not believe they had meetings centered on the analysis of equity data. Other participants knew of such meetings, but they occurred at the district level. Therefore, they would have been outside of the scope of my research, as school leaders had no input in the sessions. Finally, other leaders told me I would have to get in contact with lead teachers, who control these types of meetings, and those contacts did not return my request. This chapter presents the results of those interviews and observations, guided by the following research questions:

> 1) What are school leader's espoused beliefs about social justice?
>   a.) What internal and external factors influence these beliefs?
>   b.) How do these beliefs influence their social justice goals?
>   c.) Do accountability standards influence these beliefs and goals?
> 2) What are the practices school leaders utilize to achieve their social justice goals?
> 3) What are the interactions between or among their beliefs about social justice and accountability standards?

After conducting and transcribing my interviews and observation field notes, I began my data analysis by coding it. Coding "…represents the operations by which data are broken down, conceptualized, and put back together in new ways" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990 p. 57). A code is "…a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing and/or evocative attribute from portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldana, 2009, p.3). Coding is a multi-step process, which required me to work through multiple stages, developing

and refining my codes as I progressed. The first step in my process was open coding, in which I

read my transcripts, and wrote down words and short sentences that captured the nuances of my

data (Saldana, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I began this process by assigning each stanza of

the transcripts a letter and a number so I could cross reference it throughout my analysis. I jotted

important words, phrases, or sentences; capturing participants' beliefs, values, and practices, in

the margins. I then made initial notes about repeating phrases or topics.

As Saldana (2009) suggests, I started the coding process simultaneously as I was still

collecting data. This allowed me to jot down words and phrases that struck me early in my

analysis process (Saldana, 2009), and influenced future research questions. By coding and

gathering data simultaneously, I was able to further investigate topics my participants revealed

early in the interview process. This allowed me to probe deeper into my participants' responses

and clarify broad or confusing answers.

One round of coding is rarely enough to gather the full meaning of qualitative data

(Saldana, 2009). Therefore, I conducted multiple rounds of coding. After initially open coding

all of my transcripts, I used axial coding to discover how the open codes from each individual

transcript fit together in common categories across each participant's data (Strauss & Corbin,

1990, Meyer, 2001). To do this, I created a new document organizing common phrases I had

open coded across transcripts into categories. Each category received a new letter and numerical

code to facilitate cross referencing later. Organizing my data into common categories allowed

me to triangulate earlier data I had collected with data collected in later interviews to check for

trustworthiness.

I then embarked on a second round of axial coding, in which I compared the categories

between all of my participants to find common codes and categories across my data. Eventually,

I organized these codes and categories into emergent themes common across my participants'

data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Saldana, 2009). Using my cross-referencing process, I was able to

continuously provide textual evidence from my transcripts as support for the common categories

I uncovered. Throughout this processes I also kept a "code book" to capture the meanings of

codes as I created them, as well as my thoughts and ideas throughout the process. This helped

me to keep track of the reasons why I created codes, and made it easier for me to see connections

and differences between my sets of data (Saldana, 2009). As I collapsed codes into one another,

created new codes, or deleted uncommon codes, I updated my code book and noted the reasons

for the adjustments.

   After conducting axial coding I was able to uncover three major themes, each guided by

research questions (Saldana, 2009). I used the tool found in appendix (Appendix D) to help me

better organize my data into my final themes, categories, and supporting codes; similar to

Saldana's (2009) process for data analysis. The final themes I uncovered in my data were:

leaders' beliefs about social justice, the internal and external influences of those beliefs, and

finally leaders' goals and practices for social justice. Within those themes I uncovered various

categories. Within the theme of "Beliefs About Social Justice" I present leaders' definitions of

both social justice and equity; explore the relationship my participants saw between the two

terms; present the role my participants' believed leaders play in the promotion of social justice;

and discuss the lack of success they felt they had in the promotion of social justice. Within the

theme of "Influences" I will discuss the internal and external factors influencing my participants'

understanding of social justice. Finally, I will discuss the social justice goals leaders have and

the practices they employ to achieve these goals, the factors influencing those goals, and the

ways those goals are measured within the theme of "Goals" (Figure 5). At the end of this

chapter I will present my concluding finding suggesting leaders' personal values and beliefs about social justice did not align with their goals and practices.

Figure 5. Themes. I will present three themes in this paper, each with categories, and sub codes presented above
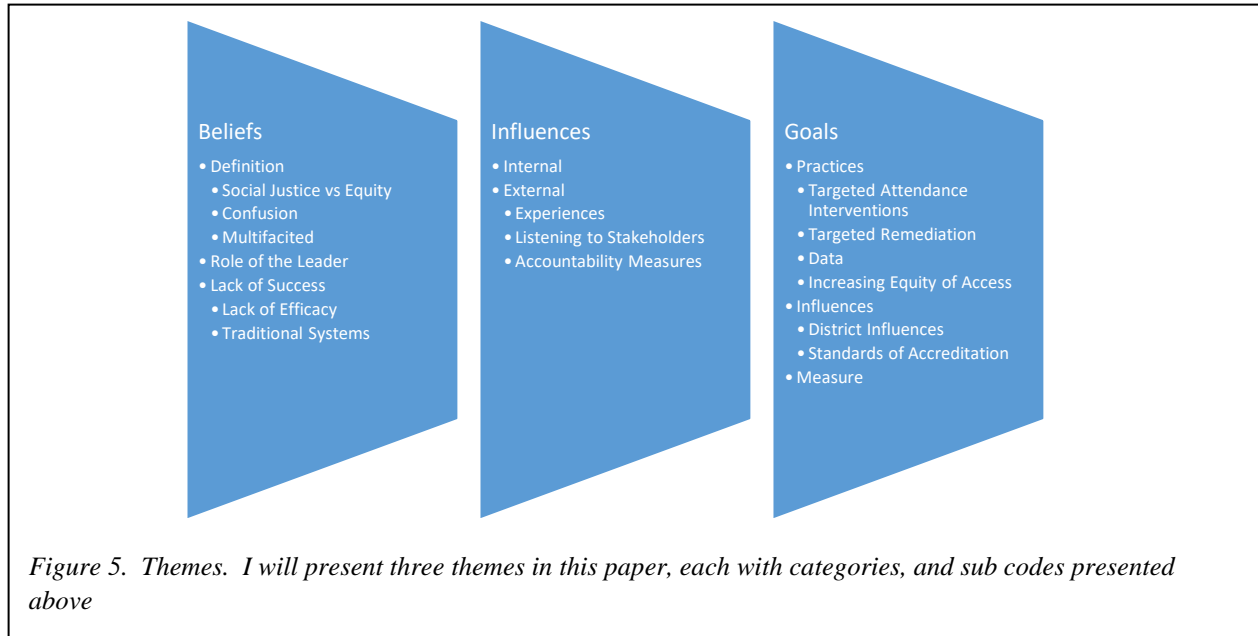
Beliefs About Social Justice

For the purpose of this research I defined social justice "…where social group differences exist and some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, social justice requires explicitly acknowledging and attending to those group differences in order to undermine oppression" (Young, 1990. p. 3). Theoharis (2007) suggests, however, social justice can hold different meanings to different people, making it difficult to define and measure the concept. Through my own synthesis of the literature I discovered various definitions of social justice dependent on the researcher's critical lens. While most theories of social justice have their roots in other justice theories, an analysis is daunting because there is no universal understanding for the concept (Rawls, 1971; Fleischacker, 2004; Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001; Raphael, 2001). Evaluations of justice change based on the individual, environments, and motivations of those

living in different times, societies, and cultures (Cropanzano, et al, 2001). The way justice is

understood and measured has changed throughout centuries of discussion (Fleischacker, 2004).

       In my literature review I presented a survey of theories of social justice; examining its

evolution over the years. I understood social justice as Young (1990) defines it: "…where social

group differences exist and some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, social justice

requires explicitly acknowledging and attending to those group differences in order to undermine

oppression" (1990. p. 3). I chose this definition because it most closely aligned with Theoharis'

(2007) definition of a social justice leader; one who "make[s] issues of race, class, gender,

disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the

United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision" (Theoharis, 2007, p.

223).

       Exploring how my participants understood social justice, and the roles they believed

school leaders played in the promotion of it, was of vital importance to my research. To gain a

deeper understanding of my participants' espoused beliefs about social justice I asked them

direct questions, such as: "how would you define social justice," as well as broader questions,

such as: "can you describe a social justice win you have had in your career." Throughout my

initial coding process I notated any time my participants shared their beliefs about social justice,

or social justice leadership. This gave me better insight into their understandings of this broad

topic.

       At the conclusion of my data analysis, I uncovered three categories under the theme of

"Beliefs About Social Justice." These included: the ways leaders defined and understood the

concept of social justice, the roles/responsibilities they believed leaders should play to promote

social justice, and the belief many leaders fail to promote true social justice. Below I will further

explain each of these categories (See Figure 6).

Figure 6. Categories for the theme "Beliefs About Social Justice."   A breakdown of the categories and codes in my first theme.

Defining Social Justice

Theories of social justice have their roots in other justice theories, however, an analysis is

daunting because there is no universal understanding for the concept of justice (Rawls, 1971;

Fleischacker, 2004; Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001; Raphael, 2001). Evaluations

of justice change based on the individual, environments, and motivations of those living in
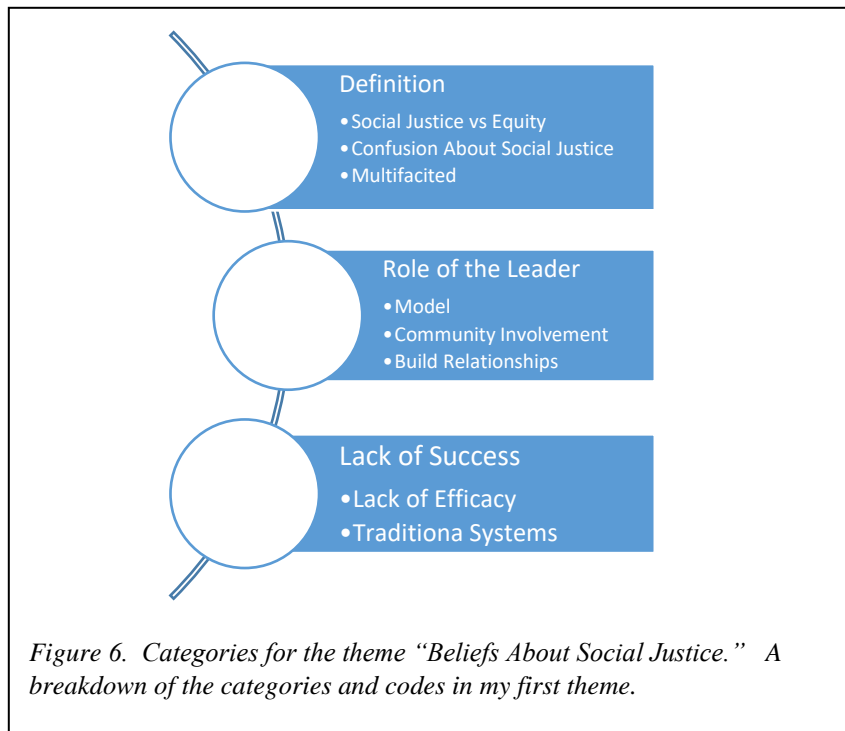
different times, societies, and cultures (Cropanzano, et al, 2001); and the way justice is

understood and measured has changed throughout centuries of discussion (Fleischacker, 2004).

Due to the breadth of understandings of social justice, it was important for me to uncover how

my participants defined the phenomena. Reflecting my review of the literature, I discovered

each of my seven participants had a slightly different understanding of social justice, and varying beliefs about how it applied to education. However, I was able to uncover some commonalities across their definitions.

Overall, leaders understood social justice as an outcome of equitable behaviors. They defined it in terms of giving equitable opportunities to all students no matter what their race, culture, socioeconomic status, gender, or ability. Many also defined social justice in terms of treatment, and argued social justice occurs when adults in the building can remove their bias and treat every student in a fair and respectful manner. This included embracing and accepting any cultural differences. These definitions reflected a broad and all-encompassing understanding of the concept. Interestingly, I discovered my participants' definitions of social justice were tightly tied to equity, despite the two terms having different meanings. I explored my participants' understanding of these two terms throughout my interview process to gain more insight into their understandings of social justice.

Social Justice VS Equity. After concluding the initial coding of my transcripts, I was intrigued each participant deferred back to definitions of equity when speaking about social justice. In follow-up interviews I asked if they believed social justice and equity were the same or distinct entities; to better determine if they were conflating the two terms. My participants were clear each term had their own unique definition, yet they were interdependent. In this first section I will discuss how participants defined both social justice and equity, and discuss how they viewed their interdependence with one another.

Social justice: A community problem. The most common code I discovered amongst my participants when it came to their definition of social justice, was their belief social justice did not occur within schools. Instead, they agreed social justice occurred outside of school in the

community as a result of equitable practices within schools. I found this to be an interesting finding, because theorists like: Theoharis (2007), Bogotch (2000), Delpit (1988), Goldfarb & Grinberg (2002), and Gewirtz (2006), stress the importance of social justice leadership, and the promotion of social justice within schools buildings. My participants instead believed they were responsible for creating equitable environments in school to assist the community; but ultimately the community was responsible for the attainment of social justice. Most leaders agreed with Mr. Well's belief social justice was too "broad" a term for education, but had a greater application to the community.

The belief of social justice as a community problem stems from the opinion social justice is a "bigger" more systemic issue. For example, most leaders I spoke with were focused on increasing the number of African American students enrolled in advanced courses; however were finding difficulties. Participants did not blame internal systems for this lack of diversity in advanced programs. They explained the lengths their schools were going to in order to create unbiased, fair, equitable enrollment procedures for acceptance into these program. Rather than blaming their systems, they pointed to broader societal injustices that were merely being reflected in the schools, causing the disparity they were combating.

Mr. Northam, for example decided to talk to his minority students, and ask them why they hadn't enrolled in advanced programs. The students answered, "no one ever told [them]" to enroll. Mr. Northam expressed his view "the people who have don't want to lose what they have, and so they want to maintain or improve their reputation, so they try to find someone else to put down," and wondered if this had something to do with the general low enrollment. It was not just his school showing low diversity in advanced programs; it is a common issue across schools; exposing the issue as a greater societal problem. This highlighted the belief social

justice requires more than school wide programs to make necessary changes, because the problems were societal.

Schools are microcosms of the greater communities they serve. Therefore, if there are inequities occurring outside of the school, they will be reflected inside as well. Mr. John exemplified this belief when he defined social justice by stating, "… social justice takes me outside, and says, you know, we already say there are things outside of the school we can't control… but what can we control and what can we aid with, and use the school as the hub for that." Mrs. Wallace mirrored the belief injustices in schools reflect a broader societal issue when she stated:

> "And for the child from the opposite end of the spectrum where their family has
>
> struggled because 250 years ago there was an inequity in access, and
>
> generationally the lack of access, it's hard to break that cycle, and so those who
>
> are disadvantaged are less school-ready, and then they're always working against
>
> the tide and the norms of the school experience are different."

She recognized injustices began outside of the school, and therefore were very difficult to combat with school wide programs. However, many participants also believed "…the school could be "…the hub…where you…get parents and kids together…" to encourage social justice to happen" (Mr. John). Leaders believed the school could be the hub where people are brought together, but the push for social justice needed to come from the community.

Interestingly, some participants even went as far to refuse to use the term social justice when discussing their educational practices. Mr. Wells argued, "…we don't use social justice as a term" in schools. He "…struggle[d] with this idea of social justice when… in an academic education setting…" believing social justice "…involves all of societies factors and

influences…" rather than having a specific school focus. Mr. John agreed stating social justice is

"…what can we do for the student as a whole, like holistically, not necessarily academically…"

Participants hoped their practices in schools would lead to social justice, but were more

comfortable defining it as an outcome of education, rather than a practice occurring in schools.

Creating social justice was seen as a community concern; however the school could be used a

tool to achieve it through the promotion of equal access.

    Equity: access. Although my participants believed promoting social justice was

important, they more frequently articulated their practices towards that promotion in terms of

equity rather than social justice. Many participants agreed social justice was the result of an

equitable learning environment, and therefore promoting equity in their buildings appeared to be

their focus rather than promoting social justice. Mr. Wells was clear:

> "We don't use the term social justice," in education. He argued, "…any time I
>
> think you're talking justice, I think people think of the legal realm and seeking
>
> justice for a certain situation. In this case, I think it's seeking a fair outcome. I
>
> guess in terms of educational jargon, the whole idea of equity are the resources
>
> and the justice would be the outcome."

The idea of promoting social justice was too large of a problem for school leaders to

tackle during the time students were enrolled in their buildings. Instead, they focused on what

they could achieve while students were present; and that was equitable access. Mr. John's belief

"equity is: I'm taking care of you while you're here, and make sure that I'm addressing the needs

that you have as an individual. But, social justice takes me outside…" exemplifies this belief.

Participants recognized societal injustices occurred outside of the school when privileged

students "…have access to stuff that other kids just don't" (Mr. John). Mrs. Wallace recognized

the difference between school readiness for students of traditionally marginalized families. She too felt her responsibility was providing equal access when her students were present in school to help end the injustices occurring in the community. No participants noted any responsibilities outside of providing equal access.

Defining equity in terms of access was not unique to one or two participants. In-fact, all participants used the term "access" when defining equity; reflecting Bradley Scott's (2001) definition of systemic equity. Scott (2001) defined systemic equity as occurring when systems function in a way that all students have the best opportunity to learn, and equal access to resources necessary for them to achieve. My data shows this was also the way my participants understood equity and equitable practices.

Mr. Wells defined equity as "about the access," and "meeting student's individual needs where they are so that they will all find success in some way." Mr. Northam reflected that definition by stating "I think, to me, equity is about providing equal access to all students." Mrs. Wallace agreed, explaining she promotes equity by "…giving the necessary supports, differentiation, and resources to help try and level the playing field." Mr. Scott used the analogy of giving students the right box to help them see the ballgame over the fence, again defining equity in terms of access to level the playing field, and said "equity is the practice by which students… [are] treated fairly." Each of them defined equity in terms of equitable access for their students.

Throughout my study, my participants seemed more comfortable using the term equity over social justice, and frequently differed back to it in our discussions about social justice practices. Due to this notation, one of my sub-codes under the code of "Social Justice vs Equity"

is "Interdependence." This code captured my participants' belief equity and social justice were interdependent of one another.

  Interdependence. After concluding the initial coding of my transcripts, I was intrigued how each participant deferred back to definitions of equity when we were speaking about social justice. In follow-up interviews I asked if they believed social justice and equity were the same or distinct entities; to better determine if they were conflating the two terms. I was surprised to find each participant was adamant the two terms had totally distinct meanings, but were heavily related and interdependent of one another.

  Participants initially had a difficult time articulating the difference between social justice and equity. For example, participants like Mr. Smith stated the two terms could be "the same or different" depending "on the situation." Ultimately, however, they came to the conclusion the two were distinct, but "in the same wheel house;" as Mr. Riley put it. Participants such as Mr. John, felt leaders: "… can't be one effectively without the other… "and are incomplete "…until you have both of those things." Mr. Scott best summarized the relationship between equity and social justice saying "…equity has a larger part within social justice. I think social justice is an umbrella that equity falls within…." Participants ultimately saw social justice as the larger goal, but equity as being a necessity to get there.

  Interestingly, beliefs about equity as access reflect earlier theories of distributive justice. Theories of distributive justice posits justice results from environments where everyone has equal access, focusing on the equitable distribution of primary goods (Rawls, 1971; Miller, 1999). Based on my participant's definition of equity concerning student access, and equal access being the necessary tool to then attain justice; my data shows my participant's beliefs about social justice align closely with this definition of justice. They believed by granting equal

access in schools, the playing field between students would be leveled, and social justice outside of the school would result.

    Confusion. Another common code I found during my data analysis was many of my participants initially had a difficult time articulating their definitions of social justice. In some cases this was because participants, like Mr. Wells, "struggled with this idea of social justice when we're in an academic, education setting…" believing it was too"…broad [a] term" to apply to an education setting. Others simply could not find a way to articulate what it meant to be socially justice because of the complexities of the term. For example. Mr. John began to define social justice, but got confused half way through, and had to re-think how he would define it. I asked him if he though equity and social justice were the same, and he stated:

> "…. The more I talk the more they become the same (laugh) umm, but uh, I
>
> think… I think… you you don't know what you don't know. So, as you think
>
> you're an equitable leader or a leader for social justice ummm, and you don't
>
> know, or you don't understand, or you don't get, or don't see some things, um,
>
> you're not being equitable, so I don't know if they aren't entwined.. and I don't
>
> know if they're not the same thing so, that's a great question. (Laugh) I'm not
>
> sure."

Other participants had an easier time defining social justice in theory, but had difficulty describing how they put that theory into practice. Mr. Northam never clearly defined social justice at all, simply saying: "But there's a lot of articles and it's hard…I think the other [social justice] is more being mindful of the different groups and making sure you are targeting those groups." He was able to discuss what social justice "looked like" but never responded with a

clear definition of how that was implemented. When participants did articulate their practices of social justice, they kept referring back to practices of equal access.

Some participants, like Mr. Riley and Mr. Scott suggest social justice was more about the behaviors of adults in the building. For example, Mr. Scott suggested it was the "lens by which we look to achieve the ultimate results of being equitable in practices for students." Mr. Riley and Mrs. Wallace also commented that promoting social justice required teaching adults how to "look at each individual situation as for what it is and try to… [address behaviors] case by case." Mr. Scott too exemplified this belief by stating social justice is "about beliefs, and understanding background, and not being insensitive when it comes to what students needs and what it is they come to classrooms with…" Throughout our conversations leaders examples of socially just practices changed; suggesting the term is broad, and few leader may have clear understanding of it. I will further explore this later in this section when I discuss "lack of efficacy" in the promotion of social justice.

Each participant easily articulated the definition for equity, but needed to talk through their definitions of social justice, focusing more on what socially just behaviors may look like rather than one concise definition. The definitions I received for equity were almost identical across participants; with a focus on student access. However, definitions of social justice varied for each of my participants.

This finding supports statements in the literature warning social justice can be difficult to measure because it has so many different meanings (Theoharis, 2007). Due to the difficulty of defining social justice, historic accountability standards have also failed to adequately define, and therefore measure, if social justice is occurring in schools (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006). Instead, these standards measure a leader based on their maintenance of equity standards rather

than social justice standards, possibly explaining why leaders had so much difficulty articulating a definition of the concept.

Multifaceted. For the purpose of my dissertation, I explored social justice in terms of race, using a dual lens of critical race theory and theories of epistemic injustice to frame my research. However, my participants were clear they viewed social justice as being about more than simply race. This was common across participants of all races and genders. Theoharis (2007) defines a social justice leader as one who "make[s] issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision" (p. 223). Understanding social justice leadership in terms of more than simply race fits into this definition, however, I was surprised to discover how little my participants focused on race when it came to social justice.

Rather than simply viewing social justice in terms of race, my participants viewed it as encompassing all of groups traditionally labeled as "gap groups" by the state. Gap groups, or subgroups of children, are defined by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as "economically disadvantaged students; students from a major racial and ethnic group; students with disabilities; [and] students with limited English proficiency" (ESEA, 2015, p. 21). Mr. Wells even stated:

> "… seeking social justice for our students would mean that we are working to
> make sure that everyone is able to achieve to their highest level, and so, not
> singling out any one demographic subgroup. But that's ultimately the goal, is that
> everyone is receiving social justice if you will."

Other participants mirrored that sentiment when discussing social justice goals, explaining most school goals apply to the school as a whole. While they have sub-goals pertaining to certain demographic groups, overall goals are not based on one group.

Mr. John explained social justice is multifaceted because traditional federal and state equity requirements necessitate a focus on all gap groups. He explained, "… I think there are some certain gap groups that you go to naturally… because it's a tradition. So you go to…economic disadvantaged, you go to special education, you go to black…" Throughout my interviews and observations I noticed participants focus their efforts on multiple groups of students; including: special education students, minority students, and economically disadvantaged students. When observing data meetings I noted each of these groups were highlighted, with a focus predominantly on special education students. This could be evidence that leaders' social justice focuses are shaped by external requirements, as the new state accreditation standards in Virginia now require students in each designated "gap group" to show growth; including students who receive special education services.

Mr. Northam summarized all participants' beliefs when it came to social justice when he stated:

"…equity… is not just a matter of black and white." He tries "…to make sure people understand that equity is not just about race. Equity is equal treatment of all period. Whether you are African American, Caucasian. Whether you're a male or a female. Whether you're a senior or a freshman. Whether you're an academy student, a non-academy student. Everybody needs to be treated equally."

Role of the Leader

Theoharis (2007) defines a social justice leader as being one who "make[s] issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision" (p. 223). To better understand my participants' beliefs about social justice, I wanted to uncover their espoused beliefs about what it meant to lead in a socially just way. Early in our conversations I asked each leader to define the roles and responsibilities of a school leader in general. I found a lot of agreement between my participants when it came to their understanding of the role of a school leader. However, the data revealed none of their initial responses included promoting social justice.

The primary responsibilities my participants noted were: sharing leadership, being a servant leader, taking responsibility for the school and making tough decisions when necessary, supporting students, and being a curriculum leader. They prided themselves on their abilities to lead the school, achieve staff buy-in, and share leadership with their staff.

Participants agreed the main role of a leader was to build and support their staff and students, in the capacity of a "servant leader." Mr. Northam, Mr. Wells, Mr. Scott, and Mrs. Wallace all used that precise term to define their leadership. The prided themselves on building "communities of leadership," as Mr. Scott put it. Each participant shared examples of times they had worked to support the needs of both their staff and students and, as Mr. Smith stated, provide "…the best possible environment for individuals that are working for them." Participants hoped by sharing leadership they could "build capacity" (Mr. John), in their staff and students and create an environment where everyone believed they could succeed.

Participants also stressed the importance of sharing leadership with their staff, and being able to step in a do things from cleaning the cafeteria (Mr. Northam) to tutoring students in the subject they had once specialized in (Mr. Smith). My participants noted they would never ask their staff to do something they was not ready to do. They believed sharing leadership was an important characteristic for a leader to have if a school was going to be successful. Although these characteristics are indicative of successful leaders, none of these were examples of social justice leadership, as is suggested in the literature.

When my interview questions turned to the topic of social justice, I asked what role leaders should play in the promotion of it. It was at this point in my transcripts I was able to code for social justice responsibilities. Although participants may not have mentioned these as primary responsibilities of school leaders, participants did speak to specific social justice responsibilities when pressed. My codes under this category include responsibilities such as: being a model to other staff members, being involved in the community, and being a voice for their students.

Model. Leaders agreed successful school principals served as models for their staff to follow. My participants applied this characteristic to social justice leadership. The leaders were responsible to set the tone for how teachers should interact with students to ensure social justice was promoted, and should model the behavior they wanted to see in their staff.

Injustice can occur without those imposing it even being aware of the implications of their words or actions (Fricker, 2007). Understanding not all staff members recognize certain common behaviors may lead to injustice, my participants understood it was their responsibility to model the socially just behaviors they expected their teachers to engage in. Mr. Northam, for example, strongly believed the promotion of social justice must "…start from the top down.

You've got to model good behavior." Since the school leader sets the tone of a building, their staff will look to them to determine how they ought to behave. Mr. John reflected that sentiment when he stated social justice must "…come top down… Principals can say 'hey teachers, don't stress you know, let's teach, let's do what we have to do, let's make sure students are learning…'" He further exemplified this sentiment by setting difficult SMART goals for himself; only attainable if every student succeeded. He, and other participants, believed injustice occurs when some groups of students are left out of success goals, so he modeled setting lofty goals of achievement for all students with the expectation his staff would follow suit. He wanted them to see it was okay if the goal was not achieved, so long as time was spent promoting every student equally.

One of the behaviors many of my participants recognized as being necessary to model for social justice was how to overcome implicit bias. Fricker suggests epistemic justice can only be attained when all individuals are given credit for the knowledge they possess (Fricker, 2007). This can occur when individuals adopt epistemic virtues pushing them to be critical and reflexive of their own prejudices and biases when it comes to granting knowledge credit to others (Fricker, 2007). Interestingly, the participants who were the most focused on removing implicit bias were enrolled in PhD programs, and had a clear understanding of the literature suggesting this link between implicit biases and injustice. They noted their time in a PhD program influenced this understanding. They also recognized how difficult it is to recognize and remove one's own bias, and therefore knew it was important to model this behavior to their staff.

Participants like Mr. Riley, Mr. Scott, and Mrs. Wallace were constantly cognizant of their biases when they interacted with students. Mr. Riley exemplified this belief when he noted:

"if we can remove… personal stance[s] sometimes from a situation and just

look at it as objectively as we can…then we're able to make better decisions as

far as the social justice piece…. Those in leadership positions… [should]

remove your personal biases or your personal anxiety or fears that you may

have… to be able to simply address that particular behavior of that student in

that setting."

The school leaders I interviewed understood the difficulty of overcoming bias, due to

having to admit personal biases exist. People are resistant to admitting they have biases because

they fear this means they are racist or prejudice (noted by Mr. Riley). However, this is not the

case. Everyone has biases from their own past experiences, and the only way to overcome them

so they do not cloud your interaction with others is to realize they are there. My participants felt

it was the leaders' responsibility to be aware of the biases amongst their staff, and model how to

overcome them. Mr. Scott exemplified this sentiment when he noted:

"…the leader within the school…has to be ever mindful as to what's happening

within those classrooms, the delivery, the planning for that instruction, there's just

so many little areas I think that are intricately connected that if you're not careful,

we can have the best of intentions and have injustice going on all around us just

based upon our bias and our way of looking at things…"

My participants understood removing biases were not easy, but the leader is the one

responsible for modeling strategies to overcome these to ensure interactions with students

do not result in the promotion of injustice in their schools.

My participants were also aware many of their staff may not even realize they have

biases clouding the way they interacted with students. Mr. Northam noted, "…some teachers…

don't realize that they're treating kids differently." They believed this is why it was so important

for leaders to model the behaviors they wanted to see their teachers using. Mr. Riley was

another leader who stressed the role of a social justice leader as a model. He believed

"…a social justice leader needs to be able to model how it is we create

opportunities, atmospheres, even things outside of that like curriculum… I think

the leader has to model it through expectations, I think [a] social justice leader

also is willing to engage those that are willing to follow."

Participants believed leaders needed to model behaviors they hoped their teachers would

engage in, and furthermore engage with staff who would follow if they wanted to be successful.

When teachers failed to engage in these behaviors, my participants believed it was their

responsibility to have "courageous conversations," as Mr. Northam termed them, to directly

show them what the expectations were.

By modeling expected behaviors, my participants were able to train their staff how to

share the responsibility of promoting social justice in the schools. They recognized it as a

difficult understanding, and therefore necessary if they wanted social justice to be promoted

because it must be a school community effort.

Community Involvement. Promoting social justice requires understanding the needs of

the community a school serves. Involving the community in decisions is a key element in the

promotion of social justice in schools (Delpit, 1988). Participants were split when it came to

their belief about community involvement in schools. Some thought community members

involvement in school wide decisions should be limited, while others were willing to open their

doors and include community stakeholders throughout the decision making process. The

difference appeared to be in the way the leader understood the role of the school. Those who

believed it was there job to serve the entire community were open to inviting parents and community members into the fold when making decisions. Those who were more student focused believed parents and community members should feel comfortable voicing concerns, but should leave the decision making up to those who work in the school every day.

    School leaders who did not believe the community should be involved in all school-wide decisions based it on the belief those outside of the school have limited knowledge of the needs within the school. For example, Mr. John stated, "…when we talk about school goals like that, uh, I don't think it's appropriate to bring parents in and community members, because you know, they just don't know." Mr. Riley agreed believing parents have been out of the school systems for too long to truly understand what they need to function successfully.

    Despite their apprehension to include parents and community members in every decision made in the school, all of my participants' did believe it was important to hear the concerns of the those they serve, and address those needs in the best way possible. For example, Mr. Riley believed "…listening to what they [stakeholders] have to say, listening to parents, listening to students about what their lives are like outside of school…" allows leaders to have a greater understanding of the needs of the constituents they serve. Although Mr. Smith was one of the wary participants when it came to community involvement, he also recognized parents, "…are the first teacher, and we have to understand that's another relationship building piece we have to put in place." These leaders understood it was the responsibility of the school leader to include parents in some capacity, even if it was just limited.

    Other participants took a different stance when it came to including parents and community members in school wide decisions; frequently reaching out to the community to better understand their needs, and the needs of the children they serve. Mrs. Wallace

summarized the motivation of leaders to include the community in many school based decisions when she stated the school vision must "…fit the needs of the population you're serving." To understand this you must be "…in tune with the people you're working with." Leaders who focused on this belief got out in the community and spoke to parents, community organizers, pastors, and local businesses to see if they could gain an understanding of what they needed from the school. Participants like Mrs. Wallace, Mr. Northam, and Mr. Wells had no issues letting parents come into the school, take a look around, and have open discussions about what their needs were, and how the school could better accommodate those needs.

Relationships. One important role all participants made mention of was being visible to students, and forming strong relationships. Each participant prided themselves on the fact their students knew they were cared about and felt their voices were heard. Social justice literature suggests leaders who make conscious decisions to be an open and active communicator with students and families of groups who have been traditionally marginalized (Auerbach, 2009, Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002), create a more socially just environment; by inviting these families to have a voice in the culture of the school and in their own education (Delpit, 1988). Although this behavior is a characteristic of a social justice leader, no participant defined this as being a practice they embark on to promote justice; they just viewed it as essential to being a good leader.

All of my participants agreed leadership is ultimately about supporting students. Mr. Riley defined this role more clearly by stating it was his job to create a "safe, somewhat nurturing environment" that met the needs of his students. At the conclusion of my first interview I asked each leader how they believed their students would define them. I wanted my participants to reflect on students' perspective of their leadership. Interestingly, every participant

hoped their students would describe them as being there to support them, being a willing listener, and being someone they could go to in times of need.

The leaders I interviewed for my study were adamant the most important part of their job was building their students up by hearing them out and addressing their needs. Mr. John was exuberant when he explained to me the interaction with his students were his favorite part of the day "…because that's fun! That's why… you start teaching… because the kids… you know, engaging with the kids on a person level." Leaders agreed being there for students was an important way to let them know adults in the building cared about them. Mr. John stated, "…it's just being caring… regardless of what you do to them or for them, that's what they appreciate more than anything." Mr. Smith agreed when he reflected on the time spent with his students. He had an open door policy with his students, and believe the conversations they had were important "because students, they want you to believe in them."

All of the leaders I interviewed believed being visible was important. They did not become principals to sit behind their desks and do paper work. They value the relationships they have with their students. Mrs. Wallace, Mr. Scott, and Mr. Wells took their roles as active listeners a step further by including students in the decisions of their buildings. They meet with student committees regularly to discuss student needs and concerns for the building, and make changes based on student input and feedback. Involving student voices in the decisions they made were important to them, because they wanted their students to feel heard, and validated.

Lack of Success

The final category I uncovered under the theme of "Beliefs About Social Justice," was the surprising agreement leaders are unsuccessful promoting social justice in their schools. Mr. John summed up the belief of all participant when he said "it's [social justice] always an issue. I

don't think it never isn't an issue." However, few felt leaders were successful in addressing this

issue; and even fewer believed the current system successfully addressed social justice problems;

reflecting the research of Ladson-Billings (2006) presented in my literature review. Mr. John,

for example, stated he had never seen any leader successfully implement social justice programs

into their schools.

Some of my participants felt they were the ones who were unsuccessful; while other

reflected on their own moderate success, but did not believe the majority of school leaders were

successful social justice leaders. Interestingly, each leader had a slightly different reason they

attributed to this lack of success. Some felt it was due to lack of efficacy and understanding

about social justice, while others blamed the system. These participants believed they did all

they could within a system that was failing to be socially just. Those who reflected on their own

lack of success understood what they "should" be doing to promote social justice, but had

various explanations for why those actions could not be done.

Lack of Efficacy. One of the explanations for lack of success was lack of efficacy, due

to a lack of understanding about how to successfully promote social justice. They knew injustice

existed, as Mr. John pointed out, but were not sure what they could do to end it. Mr. Wells even

"grappl[ed] with this topic…" asking, "…how do you define social justice?... What is it?" He

did not recognize "justice" as being a term used academically. If school leaders have a difficult

time defining the term, as I addressed earlier in this analysis, how can they be expected to

successfully engage in behaviors to address it?

My participants believed "…all leaders have the intention to be socially just… they know

there is a problem and want to do something to fix it" (Mr. Scott). However, they "don't think

they can… they just don't know how to do it…" (Mr. John). Failure is the result of leaders not

knowing how to accomplish the lofty requirements of promoting social justice. This lack of knowledge may be due to a lack of programs on the collegiate level to prepare school leaders to be social justice advocates. In her (2013) article, Matias shined light on the lack of social justice training new teachers receive. Many believe if they simply use culturally responsive pedagogy, they will achieve social justice (Matias, 2013). However, this is not the case. School leaders need more training in what social justice leadership looks like if they are going to be expected to promote it.

Participants also noted lack of efficacy may be due to a fear to engage in the difficult tasks required to promote social justice. Promoting social justice requires standing up against the status quo (Bogotch, 2000; Theoharis, 2007), which is not an easy task. As Mr. Scott put it, some leaders are just unwilling, or frightened "…to reach out and to do, or be vulnerable." They are simply unable to engage in the tough conversations required to promote social justice, noting, "… we can't afford to not engage in the conversation." Removing personal biases is another crucial step in the promotion of social justice (Fricker, 2007). However, this is another task requiring leaders to be vulnerable, and admit biases occur. Leaders I interviewed believed this was difficult for some school leaders because, "…people don't want to because then they think they are racist, and that's a big sin. No one wants that label" (Mr. Riley). Their lack of understand makes them frightened to take the first step vital in promoting social justice.

Some leaders believed the lack of efficacy wasn't due to any internal fears or misunderstandings, but was due to the belief they simply had no authority to make the necessary changes. Mrs. Wallace summarized the phenomena in her statement:

"…I think that part of it is that building leaders who see potential, root cause(s),

and can address it don't have the authority to do so." Leaders "…see where some

potential solutions could be at either level, but…have no authority over those

levels" so they simply do nothing. She thinks "sometimes… it's the resources,

and you know, getting community engaged in a lot of the issues… it's an

epistemic injustice that had created a cycle, and a school can't fix, just purely fix

a cycle."

My participants understood although many school leaders understand societal injustices

exist, they do not believe they have enough power or authority to fix it on their own. Social

justice is bigger than a school issue. Without whole community involvement, nothing can

change. This lack of efficacy leads many to simply do nothing.

Traditional Systems. Lack of efficacy or understanding was not the only factor my

participants believed hindered successful social justice leadership. Some of them blamed the

very system they worked in for making the implementation of socially just procedures difficult

for school leaders. Participants were critical of the current system being used to address equity,

because it does not go far enough to address the root causes of the inequity experienced in

schools. For example, Mrs. Wallace stated, "we perpetuate injustice. We put Band-Aid fixes on

things, but don't address the root causes of issues." Mr. John agreed, saying, "we currently

aren't addressing why students have issues, we are only accommodating for what they have

rather than addressing the gap itself." Shields (2004) and Ladson-Billings (2006) also

recognized many programs designed to promote equity in schools actually foster injustice by

exacerbating the white norms that continue to cause injustices. My research shows my

participants also recognized this phenomena.

The question then becomes if the current system we have is simply not working, why do

we continue to use it? Mr. Riley suggested "we keep the same model because it is what we have

always done, but it does not fit everyone." Bogotch (2000) recognized the responsibility of a social justice leader to challenge the unjust status quo, exacerbating epistemic injustice in their schools (Bogotch, 2000). Social justice leaders publically denounce programs which continue injustices in their schools, creating an inequitable environment for their students. This can be difficult for leaders, because many accepted programs designed to help marginalized students may actually result in their continued marginalization (Shields, 2004). Critical race theorists postulate dominant white male culture created this status quo (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Epistemic injustice occurs when we accept this status quo and when those in power continue to implement programs exacerbating this privilege, with or without being aware (McConkey, 2004). Therefore, when leaders fail to question the traditional systems they have been using to promote equity, the entire thing falls apart.

Many leaders, like Mr. John, blamed the accountability system for his failure in the promotion of social justice. He was so "…concentrated on the standards and looking at generalized pedagogical kinds of things…" he forgot to address "…cultural needs of a person, or how are you making it relevant." He felt he spent most of this time having conversation about management, but failed to talk to his teachers about how to promote instruction in a way to also promote equity. Mrs. Wallace reflected this sentiment discussing how leaders spend more time employing a "fingers in the dam attitude of compensation" which is a "huge part of the problem." She too blames:

> "the pressure for the high stakes tests and accreditation…" for the reasons why
> "…school administrators, [and] school leaders focus on 'well I gotta fix this right
> now. I gotta get us accredited right now. I can't take the time to focus on what I
> can fix for something that's five years down the road'…" Leaders simply "live in

a state of triage, constantly putting out fires instead of stepping back and

addressing those root causes and preventing the fires from even starting…"

She exemplified the belief of other participants by arguing if leader could do more work,

"…on the front end, to reduce the issues, attack the root causes of these inequities, rather than

[employ] Band-Aid fixes… [and] after the fact solutions, we'd be much farther along and so

much better."

Two participants, Mr. Scott and Mr. Riley went further to criticize the system by pointing

out the implicit biases within the curriculum itself. They believed "…one of our biggest

injustices sometimes is our curriculum is set and is established" (Mr. Scott). Mr. Riley also

recognized the bias in the curriculum, stating the curriculum and the characters present in it

"…connect to which group is in the majority and which group was in a position of power at the

time that the stories were being told…" These participants wondered if the system itself

hindering successful social justice leadership on the part of school leaders. If they system is

unjust, it would be very difficult for even the most dedicated leader to find success.

Influences

One of the goals of my research was to better understand what influenced my

participants' espoused beliefs and practices of social justice. After uncovering participants'

beliefs about social justice, I next coded for factors influencing those beliefs. Conducting a

qualitative study allowed me to deeper analyze this theme, as it allows researchers to better

understand the meanings participants make about their lives and experiences (Bogdan & Biklen,

2007; Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). In my analysis I discovered there were both internal

and external factors influencing my participant's beliefs and practices of social justice. I coded

"internal factors" to be personal values or traits influencing social justice beliefs and practices.

External factors included any events or people who had influenced my participants' beliefs and practices. Internal factors were slightly different for each participant based on their personal past experiences. However, there were three common external factors including: past job experiences, students/parents, and accountability standards. (See Figure 7)
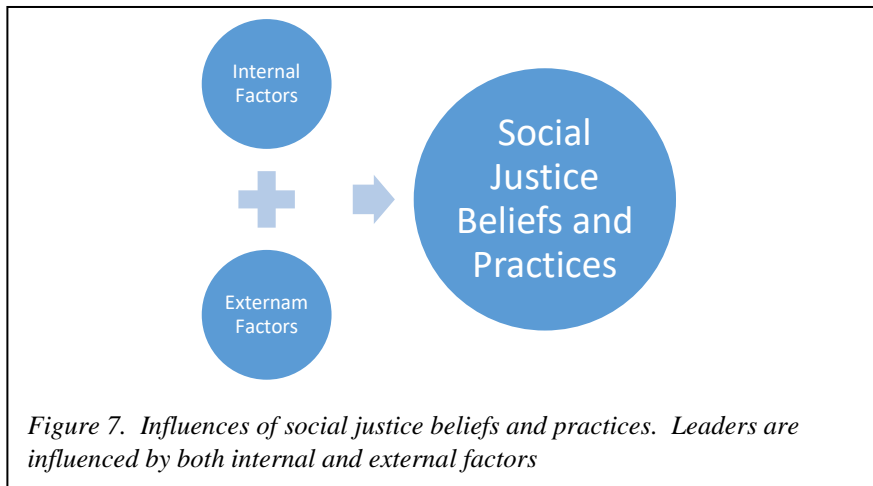
Figure 7. *Influences of social justice beliefs and practices. Leaders are influenced by both internal and external factors*

Internal Factors

Throughout my analysis, I coded internal factors to be any personal value or trait that shaped or influenced my participants' beliefs and practices of social justice. Although these factors varied, there were some values common amongst my participants. These values were expressed after I asked participants what they credited to influencing their beliefs and practices about equity and social justice.

Most participants who expressed an internal influence for their social justice practices articulated feeling an internal drive to simply do what is right. Mr. Northam went as far as to call it a "calling." He believed his "…calling was to work for the underdog, to always ... someone's got to look out for the underdog..." This was common across participants who

believed they had an internal drive to be socially just. Their practices weren't based on requirements from the district, state, or federal government; they simply believed being socially just was the right thing to do.

Other participants believed they acted in socially just ways because they personally valued the meaningful engagement of all students. Mr. Riley, for example, believed educators should create an inclusive environment to engage students and keep them coming back each day ready to learn. He believed, "…kid[s] can't learn if they're not there. So, attendance is a big deal..." Participants were also driven by their value of student engagement. Participants like Mr. Riley and Mr. Wells both believed students needed to be engaged because, if kids are not "…engaged in the lesson, what's' the point of… coming to school?" (Mr. Wells). These personal values of education influenced some participants to strive to create equal and engaging learning environments for all students to feel valued and represented; a key component of a socially just school system.

External Factors

More evident in my transcripts was evidence of external influences on leaders' beliefs and practices of social justice. Like the internal factors, external factors varied based on the past experiences of each participant. However, I did find some common codes amongst each participant I interviewed. These common factors included: past experiences; both personal and professional showcasing injustice in the world, listening to the needs of the students and parents they served, and both federal and state accountability standards. (See Figure 8)

Figure 8. External Influences. Leaders were externally influenced by their students and their parents, their professional experiences, and the accountability standards.
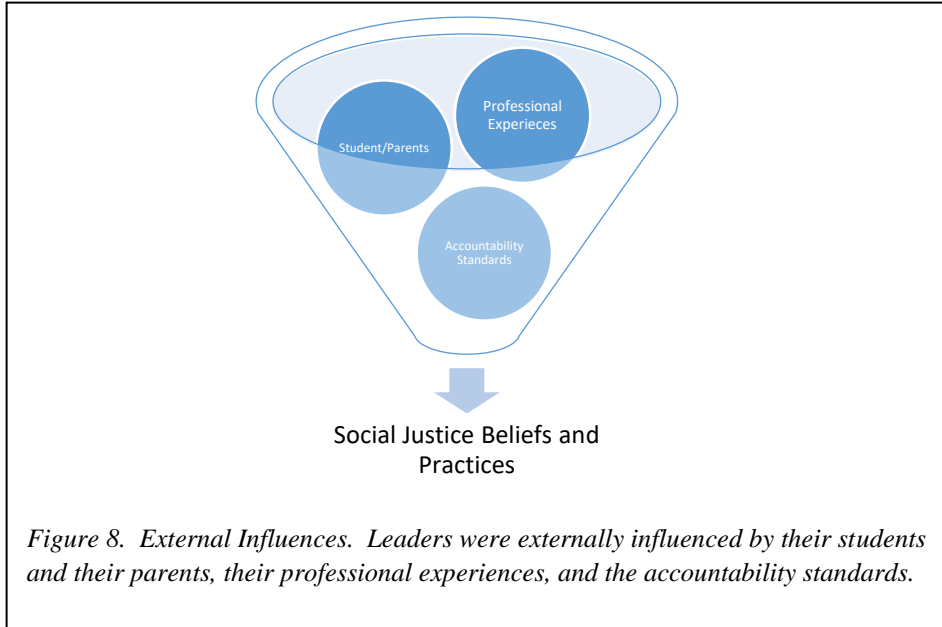
Experiences. When I asked my participants what shaped their beliefs about social justice, most had a story about a past experience showcasing how injustice exists in the world. After their experience, they were determined to work to promote justice in their careers as educators. Some of these experiences occurred in their personal lives, while others occurred professionally. However, the result was the same: these experiences sparked an internal pull to promote justice because, as Mr. Northam stated, it became "just something inside of me that I'm just passionate about."

Personal: Most personal experiences influencing social justice came from how my participants were raised. Participants attributed their drive to create a more equitable world to their parents influence. Mr. Northam, for example, told a story about the first time he experienced injustice in the world. He was in college, and was with a friend who was African American. A man pulled his car up near them, and started yelling racial slurs. Mr. Northam had

never experienced racism, and when he called home, "…there was this whole lesson from my parents of, that there are things that you didn't know growing up because you grew up in a [non-discriminatory home]." That marked the moment he knew equity was important.

Some participants had parents who were either teachers or preachers. They credited lessons learned from them for their beliefs about social justice. Mr. Riley's parents were ministers, and he believed, "…my brother has taken that path, but that wasn't my path, but I think now it is my path, but I'm not preaching what they're preaching." He was inspired:

"…to try to have an impact on, especially the group in the school that looks

most like me [African American], that gets the lead amount of attention, or

gets the greatest amount of consequences and punishment related to

behavior."

 Mr. Smith was also inspired by his parents, who were both school administrators. He was inspired by seeing "…people still come visit them and tell them stories about what they did for them." These leaders communicated the desire to lead their schools with the values instilled in them by their parents, to promote equity simply because it is the right thing to do.

Professional: More pronounced evidence of experiences influencing social justice beliefs and practices were professional experiences. Leaders had varying professional experiences depending on the amount of time they had served in leadership positions, their teaching experiences, and the types of leadership positions they had served in before becoming principals. Although each participant had unique experiences, the results of the experiences were the same: experiencing inequity first hand changed their outlook when it came to the need for social justice practices in school.

The leaders who were influenced by their teaching experiences reported encountering injustice in their classrooms. For some, that was the first time they realized there were injustices in school, and believed it was their responsibility to do something about it. Participants, like Mr. Northam, "…immediately learned how some kids are treated differently than other kids…" when they first began their careers as teachers. Witnessing this happening to their students influenced them to promote social justice when they became administrators.

Other participants, like Mr. Scott, began to see the system in a new light thanks to their teaching experiences. Mr. Scott believed he was a good teacher, and thought he was creating engaging lessons for his students. However, he soon realized his students were "…not connected; not engaged academically, socially, emotionally… they were just there, they're just passing the time." He realized what Mr. Riley noted, students are more engaged when they can connect to the content. Both leaders questioned if the curriculum was designed to include and engage all students; and realized it would be their job to find ways to connect every student to help them learn. Now as leaders, these participants continue to be aware of these injustices, and understand the importance of modeling behaviors their teachers will need to incorporate the same engagement in their classrooms

Other leaders were influenced by experiences they had during leadership positions they served in before becoming school principals. By working in central office administrative positions participants, like Mrs. Wallace, were able to witness the impacts of injustice on an entire school district. In these positions leaders "became aware quickly of correlations between kids with less opportunities, coming to school less ready, and… performance on PALs [and other tests]" (Mrs. Wallace). Participants who had been in these types of positions felt like they were

making less of an impact downtown, and chose to take principal positions because they felt they

could have a greater impact working with students in schools.

Finally those participants who were currently enrolled in PhD programs had a deeper

understanding of the importance of social justice. They were also more aware of their

shortcomings when it came to the successful promotion of social justice in their schools. They

credited their reading and having the chance to take part in scholarly discussions about equity for

influencing their beliefs about the importance of social justice. Participants like Mr. John, Mrs.

Wallace, Mr. Scott, and Mr. Riley were all adamant their beliefs about social justice evolved

after taking courses on the subject.

For example, Mr. John explained he changed some of his practices, after learning they

may have been promoting injustice after, "…taking courses [towards his PhD]…" after he

"…probably ran into something that said you know, that's not right, that's not right. Mrs.

Wallace and Mr. Riley articulated how their reading and discussions about social justice

influenced their current beliefs. Mr. Riley, for example, stated "…my mentality has altered

significantly over the last, say, I'll say five to ten years, as I read more and learn more and see

these successful models of schools.."

This finding reflects Matias' (2013) argument advocating the need for more social justice

coursework for teachers and school leaders. Those who had the opportunity to take social justice

courses in their PhD work were more aware of the existence of injustices in school, and were

given the chance to have dialogue with other schools leaders about possible solutions.

Listening to Stakeholders. Another external factor influencing my participants'

understanding about social justice was their willingness to listen to the needs of their students

and their parents. As I addressed earlier in this analysis, my participants took pride in having a

reputation for listening to their students, and working within the community. These

conversations helped leaders to gain an understanding of the struggles some of their students

were going through, and allowed them to gain a deeper understanding of what their experiences

in school were. Mrs. Wallace noted the importance of listening to students. When she started

listening to her students, by giving out student climate surveys, she learned "…how different our

perceptions are; and what adults think versus what students' think... not all positive efforts are

going to be received positively." She and other participants had created student advisory boards

to better understand student needs, and from that learned students do not always experience

equity when they are in school, even when adults create programs and policies intended to

promote a more equitable school environment. Just listening to students opened their eyes to the

differences students' experience.

My participants were also influenced by the parents and community members they spoke

with. Mrs. Wallace summarized the importance of listening to the community when she said the

school vision must "…fit the needs of the population you're serving" if a leader is going to be

successful. When school leaders spoke with and listened to the experiences of their community

members, they gained a better understanding of the perceptions of those in minority groups. As

In her work, Matias (2013) highlighted that the majority of educators are white, middle-class

women, who had vastly different school experiences than those they serve. Too frequently these

teachers and leaders attempt to create programs to promote equity, but fail to adequately meet the

needs of those they serve (Delpit, 1988). However, when they listen to the concerns of those in

traditionally marginalized groups more meaningful change can be made.

Participants utilized various ways to hear parents. Some, like Mr. John, Mr. Riley, and

Mr. Northam spoke with parents casually after school at sporting events or plays. By sitting in

the stands with parents and listening to conversations, they were able to get an honest

understanding of the needs of the communities they served. Others, like Mrs. Wallace, Mr.

Scott, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Wells had organized meetings for concerned community members to

formally share their needs. Participants felt these were important opportunities to learn about the

struggles occurring, and concerns parents had for their students.

  Accountability. A final external influence on the social justice practices of my

participants was the current school climate of accountability. This influence came from state and

federal accountability standards, and from expectations from the district. The implementation of

accountability measures holding school leaders to high standards has increased exponentially

over the past few decades (Linn, 2000), so I was not surprised to learn these standards influenced

my participants' practices. In recent years, leaders have been required to regularly demonstrate

their students have equal access to rigorous educational opportunities (Skrla et al, 2001) for

accreditation standards. Just this past year the Virginia Accreditation Standards developed more

rigorous requirements when it came to the promotion of equity in schools Va. Code § 131-380).

However, I was surprised to find these experiences seemed to be the dominant factor influencing

the practices of participants, even when their actions ran counter to their personal beliefs.

  Some participants credited the new standards with improving their social justice

practices. Leaders like Mr. Riley, Mr. Scott and Mr. Smith commented on the necessity of

having standards requiring leaders to create equitable environments in schools. These

participants believed, as Mr. Riley put it, "… I think you have to have some way to measure

across the board because you do need, like you mentioned earlier, a way to see if we can

determine if there is some equity here." When speaking of social justice practices, these

participants frequently referred back to state and federal accountability requirements they were

fulfilling

When I interviewed leaders about school goals and observed data meetings, I quickly

learned how many socially just practices were influenced by accountability standards.

Participants like Mr. Northam, Mr. Riley, and Mr. Wells focused many of their equity goals on

attendance and student engagement. This reflects the new focus of the state accountability

standards; requiring "no more than 15 percent" (Va. Code § 131-380.F.1) of the student

population to miss "10 percent or more of the school year, regardless of reason" (Va. Code §

131-380.F.1) in order to maintain accreditation. When I asked participants about their successes,

many brought up lowering the absenteeism and dropout rate amongst their students. Mr. Wells,

for example, boasted about lowering the drop-out rate, having a 90% on time graduation rate,

and increasing student SOL scores. These were common points of pride across the board for my

participants, and also all align with the new state accreditation requirements. In the data

meetings I observed I also noted how attendance and engagement for each "gap group" was

noted and discussed. The standards had a clear influence on the practices of my participants.

Other participants did not have as positive an outlook on the way these standards

influenced their practices, however were influenced just the same. Both Mr. John and Mrs.

Wallace were skeptical of the impact the new accreditation standards were having on the

successful promotion of social justice in their schools. Mr. John did not believe he successfully

promoted social justice in his schools, and partially blamed his focus on other accreditation

standards. When I asked him to judge his own socially just practices he reflected:

"… If I think about it. If I think about what equity really means, uh, you

know, you ensure that students are getting remediation and interventions,

… there was no kind, there was no cultural sensitivity, there was no,

ensuring that kids are getting, some sense and some meaning out of the

lesson. I don't think that I did do a good job … Cause I'm worried about,

well not worried about, but I'm concentrated on standards, and looking at

that generalized, you know pedagogical kinds of things … but not drilling

down enough to say if I look at, scan your class, how are you addressing

the cultural needs of this person, or the cultural needs of that person, and

how are you making it relevant? And, maybe that is the reason why

they're not getting it. You know so, probably didn't do a very good job at

that."

Mr. John was not the only participant who worried the standards limited leaders' social

justice practices. Mrs. Wallace wondered if leaders spend too much time on quick "Band-Aid

fixes," to meet certain accreditation requirements, while failing to ever address root causes of

inequity. Despite their concern about the results of the standard, and a belief they hindered true

social justice in schools, my observations uncovered my participants' practices were still

influenced by them. Data meetings were dominated by a focus on graduation rate, attendance

rate, and benchmark scores for students in the federally designated "gap groups." When I asked

my participants about their school-wide goals towards social justice, I once again found they

were shaped and measured based on state and federal accountability requirements. I will further

develop this finding in my last theme.

Goals

The final theme I uncovered in my data analysis was about school wide goals. I first

asked about school-wide goals during my first interview with my participants. I was curious to

see how many of participants had social justice or equity goals, to understand how these goals were measured, and to learn what influenced the writing of these goals. However, when I first inquired about school-wide goals, none of my participants noted having social justice goals; although they did speak to a focus on closing achievement gap scores. The common goals the leaders reported included: increasing student attendance, closing the achievement gap; with a focus on African American male students and students with disabilities, increasing the graduation rate, increasing AP enrollment and the number of students who take SAT exams, and finally achieving or maintain full state accreditation. These goals align with the state accreditation requirements from the Virginia Department of Education (2017).

In follow-up interviews, I asked participants if they had written any goals specifically for the promotion of social justice. As addressed earlier, this conversation turned to goals about equity rather than social justice. The focus of the goals reported was increasing equity through access and closing the achievement gap as measured by state End of Course Examinations.

Some leaders had officially written goals focusing on equity and closing the achievement gap; however other participants' revealed their goals were unofficial focus points related to other academic and accreditation goals. Examples of goals I coded as "relating to social justice" were closing the achievement gap in reading and math, decreasing discipline rates among African American male students, closing the achievement gap for African American students and students with disabilities. Like the goals we discussed in earlier interview sessions, these goals also highly aligned with the state requirements from the Virginia Department of Education (2017).

After conducting my data analysis, I discovered three categories falling under the theme "Goals," guided by the research question by the research question: "What are the practices

school leaders utilize to achieve their social justice goals?" The categories include: the practices participants used to achieve goals, factors influencing the creation of the goals, and measure of the goals.

Practices to Achieve Goals

As stated earlier, my participants had various school wide goals; primarily concerned with student achievement. Mr. John stated one of the responsibilities of a leader was to have "…all eyes always on your primary goal, and in schools of course, that's student achievement." In my initial interview I asked my participants what their school wide goals for the year were, and then asked how they intended to achieve those goals. I also asked my participants to reflect on their social justice (or equity goals) and discuss the practices they employed to achieve them. The practices varied based on what goals were the most important to each leader; however, the majority were concerned with maintaining accreditation by increasing school attendance and increasing student achievement on state end of course standardized tests. I coded practices to achieve these goals and found leaders employ similar targeted remediation practices, targeted attendance intervention practices, and created a school culture where data was known, shared, and discussed. To achieve social justice and equity goals I coded practices to increase the equity of access and target remediation to narrow scores between minority students and those in gap groups.

Targeted Attendance Intervention. The new Virginia Accreditation Standards focuses on "student engagement." This standard requires "no more than 15 percent [of the student population to miss] 10 percent or more of the school year, regardless of reason" (Va. Code § 131-380.F.1) in order to maintain full accreditation. Furthermore, this standard requires schools to have a "…Graduation and Completion Index of 88 or higher or a 2.5 percent improvement…"

over the previous year. Finally schools must have "…a dropout rate of 0-6 percent of a 10 percent decrease…" from the previous year. When I asked my participants about their goals for the year, each reported having both an attendance goal and a goal for on-time cohort graduation. For two of my leaders working in the same district; Mr. Wells and Mr. Northam, these goal were paramount because the "…Superintendent's primary focus is on-time graduation…" The focus was not only to ensure students were present; a point Mr. Riley stressed as being important because, no matter "…how great a teacher you are, your kid can't learn if they're not there," but also to ensure students stayed in school once they were there and graduated on time. In order to meet this goal participants had all independently created similar targeted attendance intervention plans.

Many of these plans began with the classroom teachers. Teachers were expected to take attendance, and note chronic absenteeism. Participants then contacted parents if they noticed excessive absences. Mr. Wells, for example, used an "…attendance report, and then… the monthly report… when the students hit the red flag of they've missed five consecutive in a class; those things will pop up and personal contacts are made." This practice was common for every participant.

I saw further examples of these targeted attendance interventions at the data meetings I attended. Due to the new focus on attendance and graduation rate, many of my participants' districts had outfitted them with "graduation coaches" who monitored attendance data. Mr. Wells received both weekly and monthly reports from these employees. Mr. Smith's attendance coach monitored students' absenteeism, and made the required parent contacts if a student exceeded the maximum amount of days absent.

At a data meeting in Mrs. Wallace's school I observed how much work attendance clerks were required to do. Her clerk not only contact parents if students were frequently absent, but he was also responsible for tracking down potential drop-outs. Each school leader commented on their increased focus on attendance because, as Mr. Smith stated: "…you have to remind them how important attendance is now in terms of accreditation, because if you are a fully accredited school, you want to make sure you have all the pieces in place to continue with success."

Targeted Remediation. Although there were slight changes made to the Virginia Standards of Accreditation this year, there is still an achievement requirement. Schools must still show evidence their students have an "overall proficiency and growth in English reading/writing achievement… [and] mathematics… [and an] overall proficiency in science" (Va. Code § 131-380.F.1). Therefore, many school leaders were focused on increasing SOL scores, particularly in reading and math. As Mr. John explained when he was discussing his school goals; "…the goals are pretty much, probably nine times out of ten, you're mandated to have a math goal; mandated to have and English goal." Mr. Wells reflected that statement when he explained his school puts"… so much concerted effort in math and language arts…" when they sit down to write their yearly goals. The primary way my participants' accomplished these achievement goals was through various targeted remediation practices.

Targeted remediation strategies looked different depending on the school and the needs of the students, however predominantly focused on targeting students who were on the verge of passing, but just missed it. In every school, these students were targeted through their scores on benchmark assessments given throughout the year. For example, in Mr. Wells' school, he had created a "grad lab," "which is intended to have a person familiar with the online course work and resources, to sit down with those fifteen to twenty students, [to] get them through classes,

and get them caught up credit wise throughout their junior and senior year." Mr. Scott and Mr.

Smith also discussed how they would be starting tutoring programs for students who have been

falling behind in math, English, and science; the three subjects measured by the state for

accreditation purposes. Targeted students were reported to be "bubble students," who were a

few points shy of passing state tests.

   Data. With the growing accountability on schools in America (Shields, 2004; Skrla,

Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004; Linn, 2000), continuously monitoring data has become vital

for school success. My participants were all very reliant on their data and believed knowing and

learning from the data was one of the primary practices necessary to ensure their goals were

attained. Leaders used this data to inform both their targeted intervention and targeted

remediation strategies. When I attended meetings focused on accountability, I noted the majority

of time was spent conducting a thorough analysis of data; be it attendance data, drop-out data,

discipline data, advanced course enrollment data, benchmark pass-rate data, or gap group data.

Interestingly, no matter what goal I discussed with my participants, each of them stated their

attainment strategy began with a deep understanding of the data.

   Increasing Equity of Access. When I asked participants about strategies for social

justice oriented goals the focus went back to equity; as I highlighted in the first theme of this

section. Participants' main strategy was to provide students equitable access to resources,

learning experiences, and transportation. Mrs. Wallace summarized their belief when she stated:

   "…we have students who are not as advantaged, who don't have the same

   opportunities, or the same resources, or the same support; and it's our

   responsibility to counterbalance, to recognize those things, and make sure that

   we are providing support that will bring students to that level of access."

Participants focused on leveling the playing field in ways they could while students were in

school to compensate for the lack of access they had at home. This reflected theories of

distributive justice which posits justice results from environments where everyone has equal

access, focusing on the equitable distribution of primary goods (Rawls, 1971; Miller, 1999).

The most common strategy to increase equity came in the form of the distribution of

resources. Some leaders like Mr. Wells and Mr. Northam did this by ensuring all students had

equal access to technological resources. Others, like Mrs. Wallace, did this by making sure all

students had equal access to books and materials that would teach but also challenge them. This

strategy was based on the belief students do not always come to school with equitable resources

creating the injustices in schools. Leaders believed they could create a more equitable

environment by ensuring less fortunate students had equal access while in school.

For some leaders, like Mr. John and Mr. Northam, access to equitable resources even

extended to food. Both leaders realized what Mr. John stated, "I see that my students are coming

to school hungry… I understand that you're hungry, and because you're hungry you're not going

to be able to perform." Both of these leaders created programs making food available to students

and their families during and after school. They believed equal access to food was just as

important as equal access to technology and other academic resources to increase equitable

learning environments for all students.

Participants' also understood inequity occurs when students experience unequal learning

opportunities because, "…their [families] have struggled because 250 years ago there was

inequity in access, and generationally the lack of access… so those who are disadvantaged are

less school-ready and then they're always working against the tide and the norm of the school

experience…" (Mrs. Wallace). Participants strove to create more access to experiences for these

students. Besides offering tutoring after school, and providing transportation so disadvantaged students could attend, they also targeted these students to enroll in more advanced courses. Mr. Northam and Mr. Wells' district offered to pay for all students to take the PSAT to increase access to scholarship opportunities to all students. Mrs. Wallace's district also offered all students a chance to enroll in an academy program of their choice; thus working to level the playing field when it comes to access to more advanced course offerings.

Although not as common, some participants also strove to create a more socially just school by ensuring all of their students felt equally represented. Interestingly, this code was only found in participants' who were enrolled in PhD programs, and mentioned their social justice classes had influenced understanding about social justice leadership. These participants recognized there was a lack of representation of minority students in the curriculum. As Mr. Riley recognized, when students are able to connect to the content they are more engaged. However, the characters in the current content "…connect…to which group is in the majority and which group was in a position of power at the time the stories were being told;" so many students have a hard time relating to it. Participants who recognized this strove to influence their staff to create more learning experiences to engage all of their students.

Some, like Mr. Scott, Mr. Riley, and Mr. Northam did this through modeling the behaviors they wanted to see in their teachers. While others, like Mrs. Wallace had targeted professional development requirements to help "...teachers recognize their own bias… and … responsibility for helping children who've been disadvantaged." These opportunities directly addressed systemic injustices and strove to bring them to the surface so leaders could address root causes of injustice and end it. These strategies more closely aligned with the practices presented in my literature review. Interestingly, however, the only participants to engage in

these behaviors had been introduced to these concepts through their work in social justice courses. I did not find these codes in participants who had not taken PhD level courses in social justice leadership.

Influencing Factors

Through the course of this study, I sought to understand what factors influenced my participants' school-wide goals. During my interviews, I was surprised to learn how little influence school principals have in the creation of their school-wide goals. I assumed they would have played a large role, however learned many of their goals are "…established based upon the alignment to the school divisions goals…state mandated requirements... [and] standards of accreditation" (Mr. Wells). Only one participant, Mr. Scott, stated he had autonomy setting his goals. Even his goals had to be approved by his supervisors in the district before they could be formally adopted. Below I will discuss how leaders at the district level, and state accreditation standards influenced the creation and measure of school-wide goals.

District Influence. When I asked my participants about the process to create school wide goals, each one first mentioned required goals sent down from the district. All districts had "district wide" goals that were the same for all the schools within the district. The specifics in how those goals would be met could be determined by the principals; but the goals were the same. For example, Mr. Northam and Mr. Wells worked in the same district, and each of them reported having a district wide focus on addressing the achievement gap, increasing enrollment in advanced courses, and the "…superintendent's primary focus is on time graduation, that's it. That's our first and foremost goal" (Mr. Wells). All participants, no matter what district they worked in reported having the same goals; driven by the district's central office leaders.

While all districts had goals in similar areas, most allowed school principals to set their own success criteria. For example, Mr. John stated he was always "mandated to have a math goal; mandated to have and English goal," but he could set the terms of that goal to be what he thought was appropriate. This was a common theme among all of my participants. However, despite this autonomy, each participant revealed their goals needed to be submitted for approval by those in the central offices of their district. Furthermore, my findings reveal districts base their mandates on requirements from the state Standards of Accreditation.

Standards of Accreditation. After initially analyzing my transcripts, I noted each participants' district shared common goals. Upon inspection, I discovered these goals aligned with the requirements of the Virginia State Standards of Accreditation; reflecting Patton's (2007) statement "what gets measured gets done" (p. 91). Interestingly, when discussing the importance of monitoring goals, Mr. Smith agreed with Patton (2007) and Klein (1971), stating "what's monitored is done;" potentially explaining why I found this phenomena of goals aligning to the State Accreditation Standards.

The focus of this study was on social justice goals and practices; however, I discovered my participants' expressed their goals in terms of equity rather than social justice. In my literature review I noted behaviors to increase social justice as: fostering student voice, teaching social justice, and challenging the status quo; based on my synthesis of the literature. Although some participants had personal goals and practices aligning with the literature, no officially written school-wide goals and practices reflected the practices suggested in the literature. Instead, goals and practices focused on closing the achievement gap between majority and minority students groups, and increasing equity of access.

The practices I coded for reflect state and federal standards which more closely focus on promoting equitable test scores, rather than promotion of social justice (Ladson-Billings 2006). The alignment with state standards may explain why participants, like Mr. Wells "…struggle[d] with this idea of social justice when… in an academic education setting…" These standards never use the term "social justice," but frequently discuss "equity." Mr. Smith noted, "what's monitored is done;" reflecting how much of an influence state and federal accountability standards can have on the way social justice is approach in public schools. However, the question arises as to what we are measuring; test scores, or true equitable school environments for all students.

Measure

My final category under the theme of "goals" was how goals were measured. After asking each of my participants about the strategies they employed to achieve their school-wide goals, I asked how they measured their success. Reflecting my earlier statement about the importance of data, each participant noted how much they relied on data to measure their goal attainment. This data came in different forms, including: benchmark scores data, end of course state assessment data, achievement gap data, school climate survey data from parents and students, discipline data, attendance data etc. Most participants relied on quantifiable data when measuring their goals. However, they also noted limitations this created when it came to measuring socially just environments. Many participants noted qualitative data would give a better report to deduce if social justice had been established, and worried if too much of a qualitative focus took away from the true goal of caring for students. Mr. John poignantly wondered, "are we truly about these students? Or are we all about the numbers?" when contemplating the current way leaders measure their academic and equity goals.

Participants reported relying on quantitative data when they measured their equity goals because so many goals were shaped by the state standards; which set quantitative goals for accreditation (Va. Code § 131-380). The VDOE uses SOL pass data, graduation rate data, and achievement gap data to determine if schools in Virginia receive their accreditation. Therefore, all participants use these same standards to measure their goals; once again, "what gets measured gets done" (Patton, 2007). School leaders used state and federal requirements as the minimum benchmark when they set their goals, because that is the standard they are already being measured against (Mr. John, Mr. Wells, Mr. Smith). Although this was the process each of my participants used to measure their goals pertaining to equity or social justice, few believed this reported an accurate representation of how equitable learning environments for students were.

Rather than using quantitative data to measure equity, almost all of my participants reported believing qualitative data served as a better indicator as to the equity in their schools. When I asked them how they measured the extent to which students have access to equitable learning opportunities, each of them reported relying on unofficial observation data. Mr. Northam summarized what most of my participants believed when he stated, "…to me the best way to find out what kids are learning is to actually go into the classrooms and engage the students in conversation and have them share what they are learning…" rather than simply measuring if they can correctly check off correct answers on a test. Mr. Riley believed test grades could only tell him, "…you get good grades; they don't tell me that your ability… fortitude… effort level. They're not an indicator of anything more than the grade." He too preferred observations to truly measure if students were equally engaged, represented, and learning in the classroom; as did each of my participants.

Participants did not only rely on classroom observations; most also used survey data, or talked directly to students to gain a qualitative understanding about their personal experiences. Mrs. Wallace and Mr. Wells had student organizations they habitually met with to gauge student perspectives of the school environment. As I addressed earlier, my other participants met informally with students frequently to keep a finger on the pulse of student experiences. These practices more closely reflected the social justice practices I presented in my literature review. These practices were not required or even reported to their supervisors, but were used as unofficial check points to measure the experiences of students.

Interestingly, participants appeared skeptical of how valid quantitative data is when it comes to measuring equity and social justice, but they still utilized it as their primary measure of success. Participants simply used this system because it has been the traditional way accountability has been measured, as Mr. John stated. However, he also noted "…if you try to fix it [the achievement gap] traditionally and you don't look back at 'well, maybe I could have changed this…" you will get no better results than schools have gotten in the past. This reflects Karpinski & Lugg's (2006) suggestion historic accountability standards have failed to measure, if social justice is occurring in schools. Instead, these standards measure a leader based on their maintenance of equity standards rather than social justice standards. This could be because leaders can only be held accountable when standards are easily measureable (Klein, 1971). Equity can be measured through the comparison of test scores, however social justice practices are much more difficult to quantify.

Values vs. Actions

After concluding my data analysis I placed all of my themes on pieces of charting paper to assess if there were any connections or major disputes between my overarching themes. What

I discovered was a schism between leaders' personal beliefs and unofficial practices when it came to social justice and the official practices required by central office supervisors. Although participants believed social justice was "always an issue," according to Mr. John, they struggled to understand the role they should play in ending the cycle. This could possibly be due to low efficacy, potentially due to lack of training and knowledge on the subject (See Figure 9).

My leaders understood inequalities exist, resulting in the spread of injustice; however, they did not agree on the role they should be playing to end it. This could be due to Theoharis' observation that social justice can have very different meanings to different people (2007). From my data it appeared leaders primarily utilized achievement gap data to determine where to begin when it came to social justice, resulting in them putting most of their efforts into equalizing test scores through the use of targeted remediation and targeted attendance strategies, even though this rarely lined up with their personal beliefs about the boarder nature of social justice.

Although many participants reported standardized assessment scores failed to adequately measure if school environments were equitable; with participants like Mr. Northam going as far as to state "It certainly wouldn't be the results of SOL scores," when I asked how he would measure if students were learning equally, they still utilized these measures as their primary source to make and determine if their goals had been met. Furthermore, each participants' social justice oriented goals aligned to requirements from state and federal accountability standards, rather than being distinctly written based on the needs of the school. Leaders still accepted and strove to attain these quantitative accountability standards despite their concern they may not be the best means of determining if equity and social justice are being achieved in their buildings. By evaluating schools using these standardized test scores, school leaders may engage in

behaviors promoting higher test scores, and therefore meet the requirements of the evaluation,

however fail to address the real problems of inequality in schools (Ladson-Billings 2006).

Figure 9. Values vs Actions. Leaders believe social justice should be promoted, but due to their lack of understanding how, they defer to the accountability standards that promote equity, not social justice practices.
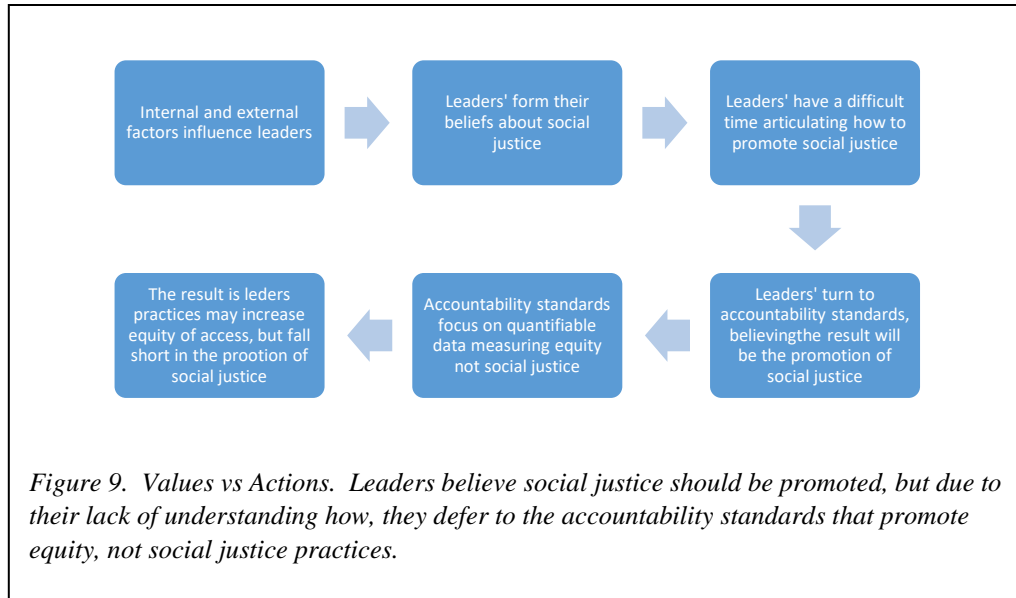
CHAPTER FIVE

IMPLICATIONS

In previous chapters I outlined the problem statement for this study; framed the problem within current and historic social justice, epistemic injustice, and critical race theory literatures; described the methodologies used; and presented my findings. In this chapter I will give a brief summary of the findings, and apply the lens created in my critical framework to further explore and understand the implications of those findings. I will then discuss the implications these findings have for the field, and discuss possible future research this presents.

Restatement of the Problem

Although accountability standards to promote equity in schools have been in place for decades, a disparity in education still exists (Au, 2013; Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, & Koschoreck, 2001; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Mirci, Loomis, & Hensley, 2011). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the nation-wide drop-out rate in 2015 was 5.9% (2018, Table 219.70). For white students, this rate was 4.6%; but for black students the number was 6.5% (NCES, 2018, Table 219.70). Although this is only a 2% difference, the gap between white and black students has only slightly changed when compared to the gap in 2014, showing minimal improvement. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2018), this percentage is not statistically significant enough to note any difference. This is the first year since 2000 there has been a statistically insignificant number between White and African American dropout rates (NCES, 2018).

For the 2016-2017 school year, the cohort graduation rates for public school students was 84.6% (NCES, 2018, Table 219.40). However this number is over 10% higher for white

compared to black students (NCES, 2018, 219.40). According to the VDOE, in the state of

Virginia the on-time graduation rate for black students was 89.56%, while for white students it

was 94.49% (2018). Furthermore, there was a disparity between the representation of white and

black students enrolled in gifted and talented programs in American public schools. During the

2013-2014 school years, there were 97,272 white students enrolled in these programs and only

17,787 African American students enrolled in gifted programs in Virginia (NCES, 2018, Table

204.80). This disparity shows, even if there is only a difference of 5 percentage points between

on-time graduation rates for White and African American students, there is a large disparity

between the educational environments these students are experiencing.

The problem is, although there is a growing amount of research showing there is

inequality in schools, and many offer school-level practices to address inequalities; few studies

analyze why this inequality continues to occur (Gillborn, 2006; Gillborn, 2008; Ladson-Billings,

2006; Morris & Perry, 2016). Standardized assessment scores report there is a learning gap

between majority and minority students, but fail to explain why (Gillborn, 2006). Current

practice suggests by narrowing the achievement gap, leaders will successfully decrease the level

of inequality reported in schools (ESSA, 2015). The theory is if students are attaining equal

scores on standardized assessments, it is evidence all students are getting equal access to

education. This is based on the idea tests can adequately measure learning (Levin, 1974). If

equal learning has occurred, then it is concluded social justice has been practiced by the school

leaders (Aw, 2013).

Restatement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand, within the context of the accountability

climate, school leaders' espoused beliefs about social justice, and the practices they employ to

those ends. Using the dual lenses of epistemic injustice and critical race theory, in this

qualitative research study, I sought out to understand the complex bidirectional and reciprocal

relationship between the accountability climate and school leaders' espoused beliefs and

practices regarding social justice. My data collection and data analysis were guided by the

following research questions:

> 1) What are school leader's espoused beliefs about social justice?
>   a.) What internal and external factors influence these beliefs?
>   b.) How do these beliefs influence their social justice goals?
>   c.) Do accountability standards influence these beliefs and goals?
> 2) What are the practices school leaders utilize to achieve their social justice goals?
> 3) What are the interactions between or among their beliefs about social justice and
> accountability standards?

Summary of Findings

After conducting and transcribing my interviews and observation fieldnotes, I began my

data analysis by coding it. Coding "…represents the operations by which data are broken down,

conceptualized, and put back together in new ways" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990 p. 57). A code is

"…a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing

and/or evocative attribute from a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldana, 2009, p.3).

Coding is a multi-step process, which required me to work through multiple stages, developing

and refining my codes as I progressed.

One round of coding is rarely enough to gather the full meaning of qualitative data

(Saldana, 2009). Therefore, I conducted multiple rounds of coding. After initially open coding

all of my transcripts, I used axial coding to uncover how the open codes from each individual

transcript fit together in common categories across each participant's data (Strauss & Corbin,

1990, Meyer, 2001). To do this, I created a new document so I could organize common phrases I

had open coded across participants' transcripts into categories. Each category received a new

letter and numerical code to facilitate cross referencing later. Organizing my data into common

categories allowed me to triangulate earlier data I had collected with data collected in later

interviews to check for trustworthiness.

I then embarked on a second round of axial coding, in which I compared the categories

between all of my participants to find common codes and categories across my data. Eventually,

I organized these codes and categories into emergent themes common across my participants'

data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Saldana, 2009). The final themes I uncovered and presented in

Chapter Four were: Beliefs about Social Justice, Influences of those Beliefs, and Goals. In this

section I will briefly summarize my overall conclusions for each of these themes.

Beliefs About Social Justice.

The first theme I uncovered in my analysis were my participants' beliefs about social

justice in the field of education. As Theoharis (2007) suggests social justice can hold different

meanings to different people, making it difficult to define and measure the concept. While most

theories of social justice have their roots in other justice theories, an analysis is daunting because

there is no universal understanding for the concept (Rawls, 1971; Fleischacker, 2004;

Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001; Raphael, 2001). Due to this phenomena I needed

to better understand the beliefs my participants personally held about social justice. The data

revealed my participants understood social justice was an issue in schools, but had a difficult

time articulating what social justice meant, and how to address it. This difficulty resulted in

participants doubting they had the efficacy or ability to promote social justice in the school

building. These findings indicate how complex the relationship is between the climate of

accountability and leaders beliefs and practices about social justice. Three different categories

emerged from the data. These included: beliefs about social justice, the role leaders' play in the

promotion of social justice, and the lack of success in the implementation of social justice (See Figure 10).

Figure 10. Connecting the categories. Demonstrates how categires under the theme "beleifs about social justice" inflence one another
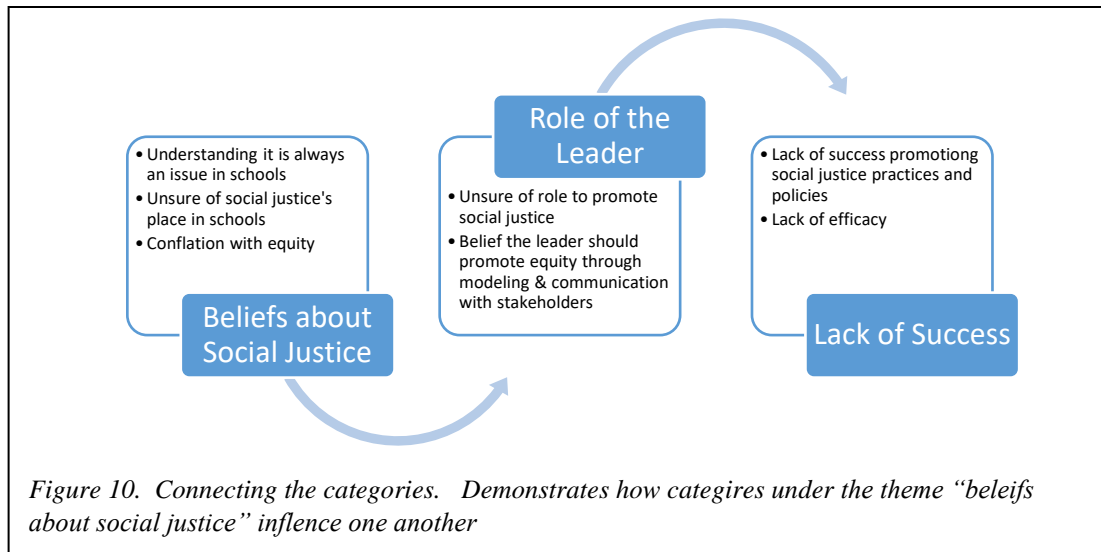
Defining Social Justice. Leaders understood social justice as an outcome of equitable behaviors. They defined it in terms of giving equitable opportunities to all students no matter what their race, culture, socioeconomic status, gender, or ability. Many also defined social justice in terms of unbiased and respectful treatment. Prominent in the findings was participants' belief social justice did not occur within schools, but instead occurred outside in the community as a result of equitable practices within schools. Participants' believed they were responsible for creating equitable environments in school to assist the community; but ultimately the community was responsible for the attainment of social justice.

Social Justice VS Equity. Another prominent finding was participants' definitions of social justice were tightly tied to equity; despite understanding differences between the terms. Participant's defined "equity," in terms of access to resources, reflecting earlier theories of distributive justice. These theories posits justice results from environments where everyone has

equal access, focusing on the equitable distribution of primary goods (Rawls, 1971; Miller, 1999). Leaders believed by granting equal access in schools, social justice outside of the school would result. Ultimately, participants' agreed equity and social justice were "in the same wheel house," and believed equitable access in school would promote social justice outside of it.

Confusion. Another prominent sub-finding was the difficulty participant's had initially defining social justice. Some participants struggled with articulating the complexities of the term, while others struggled with its application to educational settings. Participants had an easier time defining equity; each defining it in terms of access. Although equity definitions were common across interviews, definitions for social justice varied for each of my participants, reflecting the complexities of the term. This may be a result of the term "equity" being much more frequently used in accountability climate, reflecting a strong connection between the environment and leaders' beliefs and understandings.

Multifaceted. For the purpose of my dissertation, I explored social justice in terms of race. However, my participants viewed social justice as being more multifaceted, defining it in terms of all traditionally labeled "gap groups." These groups included: special education students, minority students, and economically disadvantaged students. Once again, participants' definitions were shaped by the language used in accountability documents. This continues to reflect how much the environment impacts leaders understanding of social justice. Theoharis (2007) defines a social justice leader as one who "make[s] issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision" (p. 223). Understanding social justice leadership in terms of more than simply race fits into this definition, however, I

was surprised to discover how little my participants focused on race when it came to social justice.

Role of the Leader. A second sub-finding for leader's beliefs about social justice was how they viewed their role as a social justice leader. Although the data showed participants' had similar understandings of the role of a school leader, none initially included promoting social justice as a leaders' responsibility. Initially, participants noted: sharing leadership, being a servant leader, taking responsibility for the school and making tough decisions when necessary, supporting students, and being a curriculum leader as the primary roles of school leaders. However, when we spoke more specifically about social justice leadership they added: being a model to other staff members, being involved in the community, and being a voice for their students to their list of responsibilities.

Model. Participants' believed leaders should be models, setting the tone for how teachers should interact with students to ensure the promotion of social justice. They understood injustice can occur without those imposing it being aware of the implications of their words or actions (Fricker, 2007). Staff members do not always recognize certain common behaviors may lead to injustice, therefore, participants understood they should model the socially just behaviors they expected their teachers to engage in.

Community Involvement. Another responsibility of a social justice leader was involving the community in school-wide decisions. Although participants differed on the extent to which the community should be involved in decision making, my analysis revealed they all believed some involvement was necessary. Those who believed it was there job to serve the entire community were open to allow parents and community members into the fold when making decisions. Those who were more student focused believed parents and community members

should feel comfortable voicing concerns, but should leave the decision making up to those who work in the school every day.

      Relationships. One important role all participant noted was being visible to students, and forming strong relationships. Participants prided themselves on the fact their students knew they were cared about and felt their voices were heard. Although this behavior is a characteristic of a social justice leader, no participant defined this as being a practice they used to promote justice; they just viewed it as essential to being a good leader.

      Lack of Success. The final category under the theme of "Beliefs About Social Justice," was lack of success when it came to social justice promotion. The data showed social justice was understood as an important issue, however, few leaders felt successful in addressing it. Even fewer believed the current system successfully addressed social justice problems. This finding reveals the complexity of the relationship between school leaders' beliefs and practices and the accountability climate. School leaders continued to work within the system of accountability, despite believing it did not fully address the complexities of social justice. Interestingly, leaders attributed this lack of success to a variety of reasons. Some felt it was due to lack of efficacy and understanding about social justice, while others blamed the system.

      Lack of Efficacy. One explanation for lack of success was low efficacy, due to a limited understanding about how to successfully promote social justice. Participants were aware injustice existed, but were not sure how to end it. Findings showed some lack of efficacy was due to fear of engaging in the difficult tasks required to promote social justice. Other participants argued they didn't have the authority to make necessary changes in the promotion of social justice, due to oversight from central offices. Social justice is bigger than a school issue, and without whole community involvement, nothing can change. This lack of efficacy leads

many to simply do nothing. Although participants believed more was necessary, they data shows their practices were constrained due to the structure of the current system.

   Traditional Systems. Another prominent finding in this theme was participants' blamed the system for the difficulty of implementing socially just procedures in schools. Many felt current programs designed to promote equity do not go far enough to address the root causes of the inequity experienced in schools. Participants recognized inequities in state exams and the curriculum; the same parameters used as the tools to measure if equity has been achieved. This finding highlights the flaws existing in traditional school systems. However, participants were also adamant standardized procedures were necessary if equity and social justice were going to be achieved, highlighting the bidirectional and reciprocal relationship that exists between leaders' practices and beliefs and the accountability climate. Although they questioned traditional systems, their practices were continually shaped by their belief these systems were necessary.

Influences

   The second primary theme I uncovered in my analysis revealed the influences driving leaders' beliefs about social justice. The data revealed both internal and external factors influenced leader's espoused beliefs and practices. Internal factors included personal values and traits, while external factors included prominent events or people impacting participants. The data revealed external factors had a greater impact on my participants. While their personal experiences influenced their beliefs of social justice, the data shows accountability requirements had the greatest impact on their practices; at times causing beliefs and practices to run counter to one another. This finding reflected how complex the relationships between the accountability climate and participants beliefs and actions about social justice are. It also highlighted the

reciprocal relationship between my participants and the climate of accountability. They had internal factors driving them to believe social justice was necessary; but their actions were guided by the external accountability climate.

Internal Factors. Throughout my analysis, I coded internal factors to be any personal value or trait that shaped or influenced my participants' beliefs and practices of social justice. Although these factors varied, common in the data was the feeling promoting social justice was just "right," and a value of meaningful engagement for all students.

External Factors. More evident in my data was evidence of external influences on leaders' beliefs and practices of social justice. Like the internal factors, external factors varied based on the past experiences of each participant. However, I did find some common codes amongst each participant I interviewed. These common factors included: past experiences; both personal and professional showcasing injustice in the world, listening to the needs of the students and parents they served, and both federal and state accountability standards.

Experiences. Past experiences influencing social justice beliefs and practices included personal and professional experiences. Personal experiences centered on how participants were raised and the morals their parents instilled in them. Participants believed their parents taught them a sense of justice and morality that continued to motivate them to create environments where all of their students had an equal chance of success, and a feeling of belonging.

More pronounced was the influence of professional experiences. Although participants had unique experiences, the results were the same: experiencing inequity first hand prompted them to strive to end this inequity through their work as school leaders. Some leaders first experienced inequity while being classroom teacher, others in central office positions. However, they all recognized injustice existed, and it was their responsibility to make changes to end it.

Participants who were enrolled in PhD programs had a deeper understanding of the importance of social justice. They were also more aware of their shortcomings when it came to the successful promotion of social justice in their schools. They credited their reading and having the chance to take part in scholarly discussions about equity for influencing their beliefs about the importance of social justice. Those who had the opportunity to take social justice courses in their PhD work were more aware of the existence of injustices in school, and were given the chance to have dialogue with other school leaders about possible solutions.

Listening to Stakeholders. Another external factor influencing social justice beliefs and practices was listening to the needs of students and parents. Conversations with stakeholders helped leaders gain an understanding of their students' struggles and experiences. By listening, leaders learned about the needs of their stakeholders, and became willing to make changes to meet those needs. Although the extent to which participants included stakeholders in decision making processes varied, all were willing to listen to their constituents to learn what could be done better to suit their needs.

Accountability. A final external influence on social justice practices was the current school climate of accountability. This influence came from state and federal accountability standards, and from expectations from the district. The implementation of accountability measures holding school leaders to high standards has increased exponentially over the past few decades (Linn, 2000), so I was not surprised to learn these standards influenced my participants' practices. In recent years, leaders have been required to regularly demonstrate their students have equal access to rigorous educational opportunities (Skrla et al, 2001) for accreditation standards. Just this past year the Virginia Accreditation Standards developed more rigorous requirements when it came to the promotion of equity in schools (Va. Code § 131-380). My

findings reveal these measures to be the dominant factor influencing the practices of participants, even when their actions ran counter to their personal beliefs; revealing the complexities of the relationship between leaders' beliefs and practices and the accountability climate.

Goals

The final theme I uncovered regarding social justice leadership was a theme pertaining to the practices, influences, and measurement of social justice goals. Interestingly, no participants noted having social justice goals early in our conversations; although they did speak about closing achievement gap scores. Instead, common goals included: increasing student attendance, closing the achievement gap; with a focus on African American male students and students with disabilities, increasing the graduation rate, increasing AP enrollment and the number of students who take SAT exams, and finally achieving or maintaining full state accreditation. These goals align with the state accreditation requirements from the Virginia Department of Education (2017).

In follow-up interviews, I asked participants if they had written any goals specifically for the promotion of social justice. Like earlier discussions, this conversation turned to goals about equity rather than social justice. The focus of the goals reported was increasing equity through access and closing the achievement gap as measured by state End of Course Examinations. Like the goals discussed earlier, these goals were aligned with state accreditation requirements (Va. Code § 131-380). This finding again highlighted just how much the accountability climate influenced the practices social justice leaders employed when it came to equity and social justice.

Practices to Achieve Goals. Practices to achieve goals varied by school; however the primary focus was to maintain accreditation by increasing school attendance and increase student achievement on state end of course standardized tests. Leaders employed similar targeted

remediation practices, targeted attendance intervention practices, and created a school culture where data was known, shared, and discussed to achieve their goals.

      Target Attendance Intervention. The new Virginia Accreditation Standards focuses on "student engagement." This standard requires at least 85% of students to attend school 90% of the year (Va. Code § 131-380). The standard also sets a Graduation and Completion index of at least 88%, and a maximum drop-out rate (Va. Code § 131-380). Reflecting these requirements, my findings showed all participants had attendance and on-time graduation goals this school year. In order to meet these goals participants created similar targeted attendance intervention plans. Many leaders had also been assigned an attendance clerk from the district to assist with this goal.

      Targeted Remediation. Although there were changes made to the Virginia Standards of Accreditation this year, there is still an achievement requirement. Schools must still show "academic achievement for all students in English (reading and writing), mathematics, and science as measured through board-approved assessments…" (Va. Code § 131-380.B.1). Therefore, school leaders were focused on increasing SOL scores, particularly in reading and math. The primary way participants' accomplished achievement goals was through targeted remediation practices. These strategies targeted students who were on the verge of passing their English, math, or science state exams; the "bubble kids." Leaders used "grad labs" and required tutoring sessions for these "at risk" students. These practices are an example of "educational triage."

      Educational triage occurs when educators "…divided students into three groups--safe cases, suitable cases for treatment, and hopeless cases-and [ration] resources to those students most likely to improve the school's scores… focusing on 'bubble kids' (those on the threshold of

passing the test)" (Booher-Jennings, 2005, p. 232-233). Research on "educational triage"

indicates this strategy systematically privileges certain students, while sacrificing those who are

unlikely to produce test scores (Booher-Jennings, 2005; Lauen & Gaddis, 2016; Marks, 2014).

Despite findings revealing participants personal drive for all students to have the chance to

equally succeed, their practices, guided by the accountability climate, resulted in the use of

strategies shown to increase inequity for traditionally marginalized students.

  Data. With the growing accountability on schools in America (Shields, 2004; Skrla,

Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004; Linn, 2000), continuously monitoring data has become vital

for school success. Leaders heavily rely on data to monitor their goals. Leaders used this data to

inform both their targeted intervention and targeted remediation strategies. Most of the time in

data meetings was spent conducting a thorough analysis of data; be it attendance data, drop-out

data, discipline data, advanced course enrollment data, benchmark pass-rate data, or gap group

data. No matter what the goal, all participants stated their attainment strategy began with a deep

understanding of the data.

  Increasing Equity of Access. When I asked participants about strategies for social

justice oriented goals the focus went back to equity. Participants' primary strategy was to

provide equitable access to resources, learning experiences, and transportation. Leaders worked

to give all students equal access to technology, tutoring resources, transportation to get to and

from tutoring, and healthy meals. They believed the only way to promote social justice outside

of the school was to promote equity of access inside.

  Although not as common, some participants also strove to create a more socially just

school by ensuring all of their students felt equally represented. Interestingly, this finding was

only evident in participants' who were enrolled in PhD programs, and mentioned their social

justice classes had influenced understanding about social justice leadership. These participants

recognized there was a lack of representation of minority students in the curriculum, and realized

this was blocking minority students from becoming as fully engaged as their peers in majority

groups.

   Influencing Factors. Throughout the course of this study, I sought to understand what

factors influenced my participants' school-wide goals. During my interviews, I was surprised to

learn how little influence school principals have in the creation of their goals. My data revealed

that goals were primarily influenced by district and state mandates, rather than school leaders.

My findings indicated these factors heavily influenced leaders' practices, even when those

practices ran counter to their beliefs, reflecting the intense relationship between the climate of

accountability, and leaders' practices when it comes to social justice.

   District Influence. The findings revealed most school goals are based on requirements

from the district. All districts had "district wide" goals that were the same for all the schools

within that district. The specifics in how those goals would be met could be determined by the

principals; but the goals were the same. Although there was some autonomy in how the goal

would be measured, each participant revealed their goals needed to be submitted for approval by

those in the central offices of their district. Furthermore, through an analysis of my data reveals

districts base their mandates on requirements from the state Standards of Accreditation.

Practices were then designed to achieve these specific state mandated goals.

   Standards of Accreditation. My data analysis revealed common goals were shared

among my participants. Upon inspection, I discovered these goals aligned with the requirements

of the Virginia State Standards of Accreditation; reflecting Patton's (2007) statement "what gets

measured gets done" (p. 91). These goals included: attendance and graduation rate goals,

achievement goals based on SOL pass rates, and maintaining or achieving state accreditation, reflecting accreditation mandates. Goals related to social justice also reflected state accreditation mandates; indicating the relationships between the accountability climate and leaders' social justice practices. These goals included: closing the achievement gap between majority and minority students groups, and increasing equity of access, reflecting state and federal standards. However, these goals focus on promoting equitable test scores rather than have a true focus on the promotion of social justice (Ladson-Billings 2006).

  Measure. The final sub-finding under the theme of "goals" was how goals were measured. Participants noted the use of quantitative data to measure the attainment of their goals. This data came in different forms including: benchmark scores data, end of course state assessment data, achievement gap data, school climate survey data from parents and students, discipline data, attendance data etc. However, they also noted limitations of quantitative data in measuring socially just environments. My analysis reflects the belief qualitative data is a better measure of social justice.

  Data shows participants relied on quantitative data due to the state standards; which set quantitative goals for accreditation (Va. Code § 131-380). The VDOE uses SOL pass data, graduation rate data, and achievement gap data to determine if schools in Virginia receive their accreditation. Therefore, all participants used the same standards to measure their goals. School leaders used state and federal requirements as the minimum benchmark when they set their goals, because that is the standard they are being measured against (See Figure #6).

Figure 11. Influencing practices. The relationship between the influences of state accreditation standards, to the district wide goals, resulting in the practices to achieve social justice goals
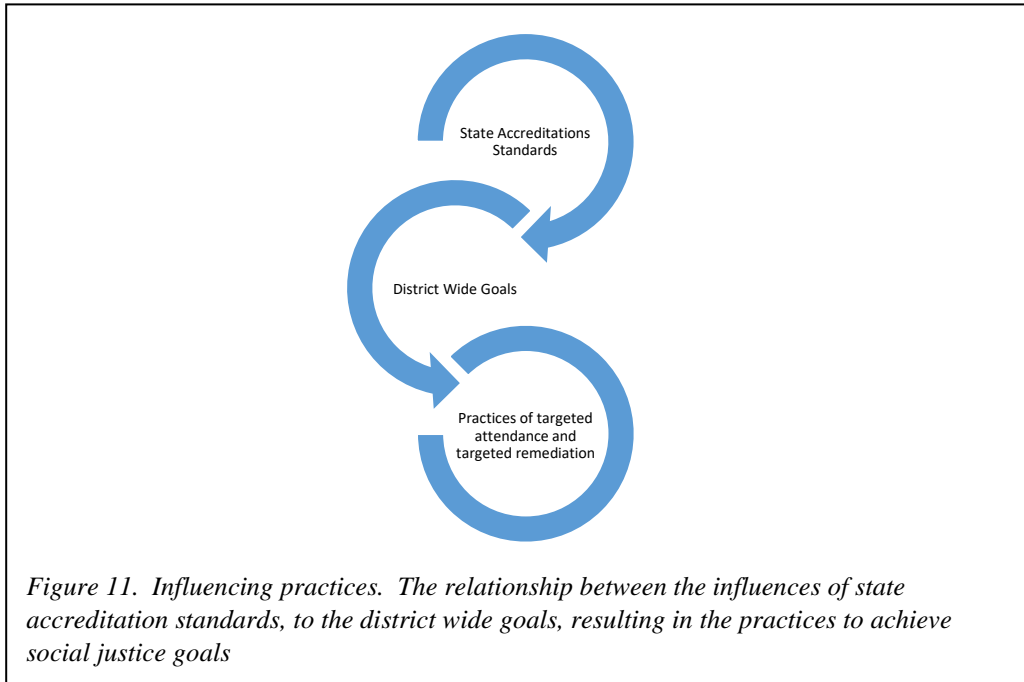
Values vs Actions

The final theme I discovered in my data analysis was uncovered after I analyzed how all three of my previous themes fit together. What I discovered was a schism between leaders' personal beliefs and unofficial practices when it came to social justice and the official practices required by central office supervisors. Although participants understood social justice was an issue, they struggled to understand the role they should play in ending the cycle. This could be due to low efficacy, potentially due to lack of training and knowledge on the subject. In this study I sought out to understand the complex bidirectional and reciprocal relationship between the accountability climate and school leaders' espoused beliefs and practices regarding social justice. My findings indicate how complex that relationship is in the way the climate influenced their practices of social justice, and their understanding of what it means to be a social justice leader. However, leaders' practices outside of the accountability requirements; such as using

observations and student conversations to gauge their social justice practices, also indicates the reciprocal and bidirectional relationship which exists. Leaders used accountability standards as their initial measurements, but also utilized practices they believed better reflected their school climate.

Although leaders understood inequalities exist resulting in the spread of injustice, they did not agree on the role they should be playing to end it. This could be due to Theoharis' observation that social justice can have very different meanings to different people (2007). My findings showed leaders primarily utilized achievement gap data to determine where to begin when it came to social justice, resulting in them putting most of their efforts into equalizing test scores through the use of targeted remediation and targeted attendance strategies, even though this rarely lined up with their personal beliefs about the boarder nature of social justice (See Figure #7).

Figure 12. Impact of the themes. Demonstrates the relationship between the themes I uncovered
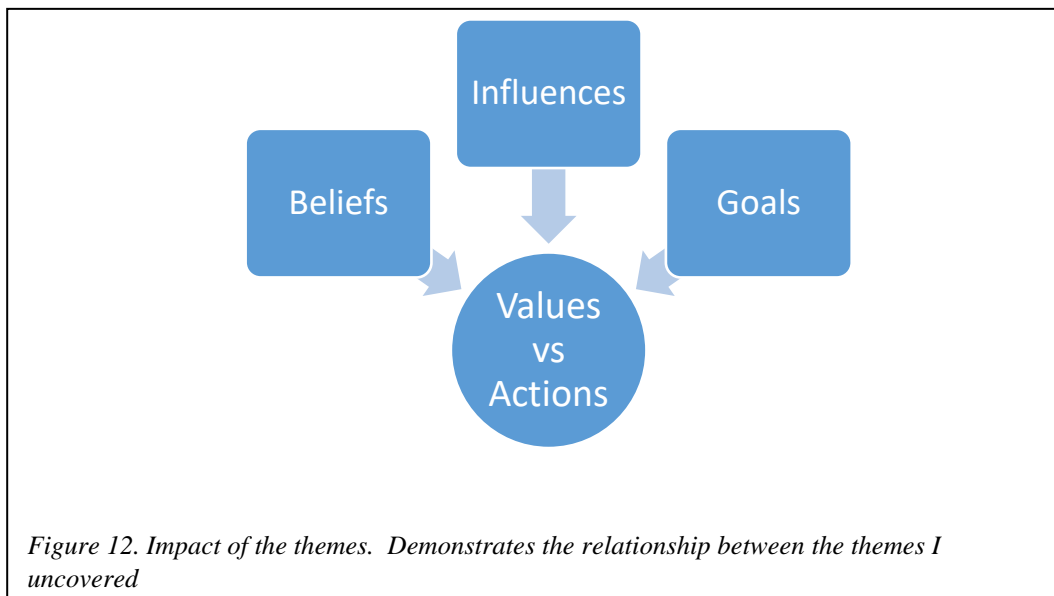
Implications

Implications for Theory

In this study, I examined social justice leadership by using a dual frame; blending portions of the theories of epistemic injustice and critical race theory. I applied this framework to understand how the environment informed leaders' espoused beliefs and practices about social justice. I combine these two lens as my framework because I see an overlap in how they relate to one another. Theories of epistemic injustice are used to analyze the injustices ingrained in our culture, and critical race theory calls on us to question the role white racial dominance plays in the exacerbation of these injustices. Researchers such as Ladson-Billings, (1995; 1998), Ladson-Billings & Tate (1995), Gillborn (2006), and Jay (2003) have applied these theories to better understand inequities in the field of education. In this section, I will explore the implications my data has for those theories.

Social Justice Leadership. In my literature review I reviewed selected social justice leadership literature from the past 100 years, in order to operationalize a definition for social justice. Theoharis (2007) suggests social justice can hold different meanings to different people, making it difficult to define and measure the concept. Through my own synthesis of the literature I discovered various definitions of social justice dependent on the researcher's critical lens. While most theories of social justice have their roots in other justice theories, an analysis is daunting because there is no universal understanding for the concept (Rawls, 1971; Fleischacker, 2004; Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001; Raphael, 2001). Evaluations of justice change based on the individual, environments, and motivations of those living in different times, societies, and cultures (Cropanzano, et al, 2001); and the way justice is understood and measured has changed throughout centuries of discussion (Fleischacker, 2004). For the purpose of this

research I defined social justice "…where social group differences exist and some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, social justice requires explicitly acknowledging and attending to those group differences in order to undermine oppression" (Young, 1990. p. 3).

There is a breadth of literature on social justice leadership, and a synthesis of that literature led me to deduce three primary characteristics common to social justice leaders. Social justice leaders listen to the voices of their minority students, teach social justice, and work to recognize and challenge an unjust status quo. Interestingly, none of my participants recognized social justice promotion as a primary responsibility of school leaders. I found this to be an interesting finding, because theorists like: Theoharis (2007), Bogotch (2000), Delpit (1988), Goldfarb & Grinberg (2002), and Gewirtz (2006), stress the importance of social justice leadership, and the promotion of social justice within school buildings. However, I did find evidence my participants engaged in the behaviors I have outlined as being necessary in the promotion of social justice.

For the purpose of this study, I created a blended lens; using portions of critical race theory and the theory of epistemic injustice to frame this study. I applied this lens to understand how the current climate impacts a leaders' espoused beliefs and practices about social justice. While using a dual lens to frame my study was complex, it was necessary because the study of social justice is complex. Understanding the motivations behind a school leader's beliefs and practices requires an understanding of the social world they practice in. Using the theories of epistemic injustice and critical race theory as lenses to view the climate leaders' beliefs and practices are formed in allowed me to better analyze and understand it.

Fostering student voice. The structure of today's education system is reminiscent of an antiquated system (Shepard, 2000) built on the discrimination of minority students. Even though

times have changed, and school accountability standards fight to increase equity, those who have been traditionally marginalized still rarely get a chance to take part in the conversation when it comes to designing equity programs (Delpit, 1988). Therefore, they participate in systems that rarely meet their needs; and can continue to promote an unjust status quo (Shields, 2004; Bogotch, 2000; Theoharis, 2008, Au, 2013; Delpit, 1988). Socially just leaders fight against this status quo by recognizing the validity of the voices of those who have been traditionally marginalized.

In practice, this can be done through a conscious decision to be an open and active communicator with students and families of groups who have been traditionally marginalized (Auerbach, 2009, Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002). My findings revealed my participants strove to form relationships with their students and worked to include all stakeholders at some level of the decision making processes. Including the community in decisions is a key element in the promotion of social justice in schools (Delpit, 1988). Participants welcomed community members to share their concerns and needs when school-wide decisions were being made. Although participants did not recognize the promotion of social justice as a result of this action, they did recognize the importance of listening to their constituents to better serve their needs.

Researchers like Delpit (1988) and Auerbach (2009) suggest those in minority groups should be at the center of decision making if social justice is going to be reached. Social justice literature suggests leaders who make conscious decisions to be an open and active communicator with students and families of groups who have been traditionally marginalized (Auerbach, 2009, Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002), create a more socially just environment; by allowing these families to have a voice in the culture of the school and in their own education (Delpit, 1988).

My findings revealed stakeholders were not as integrated into the decision making processes as research would suggest is necessary, however they were still included. Some participants worried outside stakeholders were not as qualified to make decisions impacting the day-to-day procedures inside the school, however they were still involved. This suggests leaders understand the importance of openly communicating with those they serve, but may need to extend lines of communication for true social justice to be realized. Applying my dual fame to this finding reveals the power dynamics at play in the structure of the school systems. School administrators are the gatekeepers who have the authority to allow or not allow stakeholders access to the rhetorical spaces involved in creating and changing school policy and procedures. When analyzing this through the lens of epistemic injustice, it presents a startling observation calling into question how socially just the system truly is. Leaders, who have the authority to grant community access to the decision making process, may give equal access of materials to minority members of the community, but barring access to these rhetorical spaces exacerbates a deeper unjust status quo.

The way a problem is defined influences the types of policies created and implemented to address it (Tate, 1997). Those who have the most power are the ones who get to frame what problems are import enough to be dealt with through the creation of policy (Fowler, 2013). Those who have the voice are the ones who get to set the policies addressing the problem, based on their values, beliefs, and understandings (Fowler, 2013). If school leaders do not equally view stakeholders as knowledge claimants, and share access to rhetorical spaces, I question the extent to which minority voices will truly be heard when it comes to the creation of policy.

Teaching Social Justice. Leaders who are socially just understand their schools function in an environment with a historically unjust status quo (Bogotch 2000; Theoharis, 2007), and

fight these norms. One way they do this is by supporting teacher initiative to teach students to

question norms, and promote social justice themselves, outside of the classroom (Shields, 2004).

By "teaching" social justice, teachers validate the experiences of marginalized students (Shields,

2004). This validation will promote the voice Delpit (1988) believes is so important in the

promotion of social justice.

Teaching social justice means teachers create environments where students are

comfortable being themselves, because they know they will be accepted. Although my findings

did not reflect participants purposefully encouraged their staff to educate students about social

justice, they did urge their teachers to create environments to meaningfully engage all students.

Through their professional experiences, my participants became aware injustice existed within

the systems they were working in, and believed it was their responsibility to stop it. Each

participant reported being passionate about increasing student engagement by encouraging their

teachers to make the curriculum meaningful to every demographic of student they had in their

classrooms. They recognized students cannot learn if they are not engaged, and this exacerbates

injustice for students who have already been marginalized. Therefore, they strove to increase

student engagement by encouraging their staff to create lessons engaging not just to majority

students, but to all students in their classrooms.

Challenging an Unjust Status Quo. Social justice leadership involves advocating for

social justice by questioning unjust norms (Theoharis, 2008). Critical race theorists postulate

dominant white male culture created this status quo (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Epistemic

injustice occurs when we accept this status quo and when those in power continue to implement

programs exacerbating this privilege, with or without being aware (McConkey, 2004). When

leaders challenge this status quo they are actively promoting social justice.

Social justice leaders should actively challenge this unjust status quo (Bogotch, 2000; Theoharis, 2008). It is not enough to simply say they are for equity, but they should actively fight for it. This means social justice leaders are aware of epistemic injustices exacerbated by school programs, and work to actively fight against it. This characteristic may be one of the most important for a social justice leader to be successful. Although my participants recognized injustices were present in the current education system, many worked within the current system to eradicate those injustices, rather than advocating to change or challenge systems harboring and exacerbating systemic injustices.

One of my primary findings was leaders do not feel confident they successfully promote social justice. Mr. John even stated he had never seen any principal successfully create a school environment free of injustice; despite their best efforts. My data revealed the reasons for this lack of success was primarily due to lack of efficacy or ability due to current systems. Although each participant spoke of practices and procedures to end injustice and promote equity, many felt programs did not go far enough address the root causes of the inequity. This finding reflects research from Shields (2004) and Ladson-Billings (2006); who also recognized many programs designed to promote equity in schools actually foster injustice by exacerbating the white norms that continue to cause injustices.

Applying my dual lens to this finding again questions if enough is being done to actively promote social justice in schools. Interest convergence, an element of critical race theory posits whites in the dominant majority group tend to only support racial advances and programs promoting equity, as long as they also promote white self-interest (Bell, 1980; Aleman & Aleman, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). School systems have traditionally been controlled by those who are in majority groups. This means the systems leaders are working in was

designed by those who are already in positions of dominance. Those who have the most power are the ones who get to frame what problems are import enough to be dealt with through the creation of policy (Fowler, 2013). Those who have the voice are the ones who get to set the policies addressing the problem, based on their values, beliefs, and understandings (Fowler, 2013). This once again brings into question if the foundations of the education system have been designed in a way where any social justice practice will fail, due to the reliance on interest convergence in the creation of programs.

Another finding revealed participant's lack of understanding about social justice led to their limited success promoting it. Although participants understood injustice existed, and knew the promotion of social justice was necessary, many found it difficult to articulate ways to do so. Some participants lacked an ability to define social justice, and others wondered if it was even relevant to education; instead reflecting on social justice as a community issue. Those who were best able to articulate the meaning of social justice also practiced most of the characteristics I argue are necessary for a successful social justice leader to have. These participants were all currently, or had recently been enrolled in PhD courses. They credited their coursework for influencing their beliefs and practices when it came to being socially just.

This finding reflects Matias' (2013) argument advocating for more social justice coursework for teachers and school leaders. Promoting social justice requires standing up against the status quo (Bogotch, 2000; Theoharis, 2007), which is not easy task. My findings highlight without the proper training and understanding of this responsibility, leaders are unsuccessful in the promotion of social justice in their schools.

Critical Lens. The dual frame I created for this study blended portions of the theories of epistemic injustice and critical race theory. I saw an overlap in how they relate to one another.

Theories of epistemic injustice are used to analyze the injustices ingrained in our culture, and critical race theory calls on us to question the role white racial dominance plays in the exacerbation of these injustices. Both theories suggest members of dominant social groups willingly accept policies and procedures supporting an unjust status quo to maintain their dominance; on conscious or subconscious levels. Both theories also focus on the importance of listening to the voices of those who have been traditionally marginalized in order to legitimize them as equal players in decision making processes, and lessen instances of injustice. I used this lens as a way to analyze the beliefs leaders' social justice leadership is built on, as well as they practices they employed to attain social justice in their buildings. In this section I will apply my blended lens to my findings to uncover what it reveals about the environment in which social justice leadership beliefs and practices are formed.

Epistemic Injustice. Epistemic injustice occurs when society accepts a status quo where those in power continue to implement norms exacerbating their privilege by denying those in marginalized groups' credit as equal knowledge claimants (Fricker, 1998; McConkey, 2004). Epistemic injustice is a societal injustice promoting unjust power dynamics to remain the same. Epistemic injustice may occur due to willful ignorance, or unconscious societal norms (Fricker, 2007; Frank, 2013; Pohlhaus, 2012).

Fricker (1998) argued epistemic injustice occurs when traditionally marginalized groups are discriminated against by being denied acknowledgement as credible knowledge claimants (Fricker, 1998; McConkey, 2004). Those who are seen as credible knowledge claimants are seen as figures of authority and have more power in society (McConkey, 2004; Fricker, 1998). Those who do not have this authority lack the ability to engage in what Code (1995) calls "rhetorical spaces" (as cited in McConkey, 2004). Those granted access to these spaces have the authority

to create, change, and influence accepted societal norms and expectations (Code, 1995). In this section I will apply each of these traits to my overall findings.

Knowledge claimant. According to theorists like Fricker (1998) and McConkey (2004), credible "knowledge claimants" are those who are seen as figures of authority and have more power in society. These figures are granted access into what Lorraine Code (1995) termed as "rhetorical spaces" (as cited in McConkey, 2004). These spaces are metaphorical places were norms, values, and beliefs are created, accepted, or rejected (Code, 1995). Society grants the privilege of "knowledge claimant" to those who have traditionally been in majority groups (McConkey, 2004), and therefore default to their values and norms as the norms for the greater majority. Liviatan & Jost (2011) argue when those in the majority group are the ones who have the ability to define the accepted "status quo," they will continue to support norms exacerbating social injustices; whether they mean to or not.

Applying this lens to social justice leadership reveals the importance of including student and community stakeholders in school-wide decision making processes. My findings reveal leaders varied on the extent to which they viewed their stakeholders as credible knowledge claimants. Some participant were skeptical of including outside stakeholders in decision making processes, believing, as Mr. John put it, "…they just don't know," because they are not in the schools on a day-to-day basis. While others were much more open to include stakeholders in every aspect of decision making for the school.

Those who were more open to include stakeholders effectively granted them credit as knowledge claimants. Acknowledging their credit validated stakeholder concerns, and thus served to lessen the impacts of epistemic injustice; especially if these stakeholders were part of a traditionally silenced and marginalized group. Those who continued to deny stakeholders credit

as knowledge claimants may have unconsciously exacerbated existing injustice. Interestingly, I found no relationship between the races or gender of school leaders and the extent of credibility stakeholders were granted.

Interestingly, whether participants were open to involving community members in decision making processes or wary of it, all of them spoke about it in terms of their own decisions. Applying my blended lens to my findings revealed leaders viewed themselves as being the authority member who had the right to grant access to "outsiders" as knowledge claimants. This finding highlights how deeply ingrained beliefs about knowledge claimants are, and reflects how much the accountability climate influences leaders' beliefs. It could be they believe they are the experts on educational policy, so they should be the gatekeepers when it comes to granting credit as a knowledge claimant, thus continuing to support the status quo in which those who hold the power are able to maintain it by having the power to be the one to acknowledge who is granted access to rhetorical spaces, and who is barred.

Rhetorical spaces. Acceptance as a credible knowledge claimant grants access to "rhetorical spaces." Rhetorical spaces are metaphorical places where norms, values, and beliefs are accepted or rejected (Code, 1995). They are "fictive but not fanciful or fixed location whose… territorial imperatives structure and limit the kinds of utterances that can be voiced within them with a reasonable expectation of uptake and choral support" (Code, 1995, p. ix). Code (1995) argues it is in these spaces where a person is either granted or denied acceptance of a respected knower. It is in these rhetorical spaces where a person's knowledge is given credit as "truth" or denied as "false" (Code, 1995). Those accepted into these spaces have the opportunity to set or change accepted norms and values.

Applying this concept to my findings reveal a similar finding to the application of concept of knowledge claimants; as the two concepts relate to one another. Participants who granted stakeholders an integral role in school-wide decision making theoretically also granted them access into the rhetorical spaces in which the norms and values of the school was created. By first listening to the needs of students and stakeholders, then making changes based on this input, participants legitimized and accepted stakeholders' values as the norm. This reflects why Delpit (1988) highlighted the importance of giving a voice to members in the traditional minority. Once their concerns, values, norms, and needs are legitimized it opens rhetorical spaces to those who have traditionally been left out, thus lessening epistemic injustice.

Leaders also noted minority groups were under represented in the school curriculum. They worried about the lack of student engagement resulting from this limited representation. Participants noted the lack of success leaders have with creating socially just schools, and partially blamed the curriculum for exacerbating injustice through epistemically unjust systems.

Although leaders did not articulate this as being due to epistemic injustice, applying the lens of epistemic injustice and the concept of rhetorical spaces to this finding suggests minority stakeholders are invited into rhetorical spaces as knowledge claimants locally, however this does not extend to a greater scale. My findings reveal school-wide goals are primarily influenced by district requirements; which are heavily influenced by state and federal accreditation requirements. If minority stakeholders do not have access to rhetorical spaces at this level of program design, it is unlikely true social justice will successfully filter down to local levels.

Critical race theory. Critical race theory was first presented by Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman to explain the impact of epistemic racism in the field of law in the 1970's (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). CRT proposes racism has become a normalized part of our society, due to the

continued permeation of white male values in modern politics and procedures (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Critical race theory is grounded in three major premises or insights. The first being racism is a normal occurrence in our culture, the second focusing on the importance of counter-storytelling, and the third being a focus on the effects of interest convergence (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000).

CRT has been applied to the field of education in an attempt to explain continued injustices in the field of education (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Gillborn, 2006; Jay, 2003). Scholars analyze school-wide programs through the lens of CRT to understand why there is still a gap between traditionally marginalized and majority students' experiences in school. In this section I will apply the three premises of critical race theory to reveal implications of my findings.

Structural Determinism. Structural determinism is the theory humans construct their own realities based on their language and understandings (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Delgado, 1989). Race is not a biological difference between people; it has been socially constructed by the majority and accepted as truth (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). By accepting this, those in the majority accept race as a normal part of society, and do not question its legitimacy (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). This occurs because any challenge to the current status quo would require those in the dominant group to question their own deeply held beliefs and personal identities when it comes to race and racism (King, 1991).

Applying this lens to school leadership highlights why leaders must question the status quo created by traditional systems if they want to promote social justice in their schools. (Bogotch, 2000; Matias, 2013). My findings reveal a dichotomy when this lens is applied to it. Participants understood systemic injustices existed, and were willing to examine their own biases

created as a result of this system. The race and gender of participants had no relationship with

this realization. Participants understood both the importance and difficulty of reflecting on and

admitting to their biases when making decisions in an effort to get past the traditional epistemic

injustices within the current system. Participants agreed it was their responsibility to model this

behavior to their staff. Analyzing this behavior through my critical lens suggests this behavior

allows leaders to serve their students in a more socially just way.

However, despite this understanding, participants still worked within the confines of a

systemically unjust system. The findings revealed participants had a lack of efficacy to question

unjust norms on a greater scale. All participants used the tools of the current system as a

measurement for the extent to which they were successfully creating an equitable environment

for their students; despite voicing the concerns these tools were a poor measurement for equity.

The primary measurement used was scores on standardized end of course state assessments.

This phenomena could be due to participants' beliefs they did not have the authority to make

systemic changes in their school. Once again, my findings show how complex the relationship

between leaders' beliefs and practices, and the current accountability climate. Through this

research, I uncovered major school-wide goals are made at the district level; and even those are

heavily influenced by state standards. School leaders are required to implement these goals, and

measure them using accreditation standards. Until these systems are questioned it does not seem

leaders will be successful at the promotion of social justice.

Counter storytelling. Central to CRT is the importance of counter storytelling, or

"naming one's own reality" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Tate, 1997). Counter storytelling

occurs when those who have been traditionally marginalized tell their stories, and reveal their

truths (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). This action is important because it recognizes the voices of

those who have been traditionally silenced. The practice acts as a way to deconstruct the status quo by exposing myths accepted and reproduced by those in majority groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

As stated in my Literature Review, there is extensive overlap between factors of epistemic injustice and critical race theory. The importance of counter storytelling essentially reflects accepting minority members as credible knowledge claimants, by accepting their experiences as truth. As discussed earlier applying this lens to the findings revealed a dichotomy in participants' willingness to include minority stakeholders in decision making processes. Multiple participants created councils of parents and students, resulting in their ability to freely share their needs, concerns, and experiences with administration. All participants made a conscious effort to listen to students and stakeholders, and accepted their experiences as truth; even if they did not like what they were hearing. However, the apprehension on the part of some participants to fully engage stakeholders in decision making processes due to the belief they had a lack of knowledge, highlights a failure to accept potential counter stories as valuable reality.

Upon applying my blended lens to sections of my transcripts where my participants and I discussed the role the community plays in decision making practices revealed an interesting phenomena. My participants, as well as myself, frequently used terms such as "allowing" or "giving" traditionally marginalized students and community members the "opportunity" to take part in decision making. This practice was not understood as a right all stakeholders had. Some participants worried about "allowing" members of the outside community into decision making processes due to their "lack of knowledge" when it came to school-wide decisions. This again highlights a failure of school leaders to accept potential counter stories as valuable realities. When applying this finding to social justice leadership, it reveals although leaders to listen to

stakeholders, their willingness to fully accept the voices of those who have been traditionally marginalized may be lacking, and thus could signal why so few participants had ever experienced successful social justice leadership.

  Interest convergence. Interest convergence occurs when whites in the dominant majority group support programs promoting equity only if they also promote white self-interest (Bell, 1980; Aleman & Aleman, 2010; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). When the interests of both minority and majority classes converge, policies to advance those in the minority groups will be accepted (Bell, 1980). If a program or policy threatens the superiority of the dominant white middle class however, it will not be accepted as legitimate (Bell, 1980). Although interest convergence can result in the implementation of policies appearing to promote social justice, justice cannot be achieved while the dominant white middle class continues to benefit from privileges granted to them through the subordination of minority classes (Bell, 1980).

  The implication uncovered when applying the concept of interest convergence to my data is striking. Participants all reported wanting to increase equity in their schools. From my interviews, it was evident each participant cared for their students, were deeply upset by the injustices they witnessed in schools, and wanted to do whatever they could to stop injustice. However, when I first asked participants if they had written specific equity goals, I discovered none had. Mr. Wells even stated his goals represented the high school as a whole, rather than being focused on one subgroup of students. This suggests, while participants strove to implement equity in their schools, the focus was still on the whole, rather than being specific to traditionally marginalized populations. According to CRT researchers like Bell (1980), justice cannot occur unless programs specifically target interest convergence. Although new accreditation standards now require every subgroup to show growth on end of course

assessments, leaders were still careful their goals did not single out any one population of student. This evidence suggests a subconscious adherence to interest convergence in which leaders do not create goals that may negatively impact traditional majority groups of students. Since my findings revealed no differences among majority and minority administrators when it came to their social justice goals, this may reflect how strongly traditional school systems impact the practices of school leaders.

       School Justice. Defining social justice is a complex task because there is no universal understanding for the concept (Rawls, 1971; Fleischacker, 2004; Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel, & Rupp, 2001; Raphael, 2001). Furthermore, the understanding of justice has changed throughout time and place (Fleischacker, 2004). In my literature review I presented three different definitions of justice: distributive justice, social justice, and epistemic justice. In my analysis I found researchers tend to choose one definition of justice to frame their research, treating other forms as competing definition. For example, Young (1990) challenges the use of distributive justice, worrying the concept does not go far enough in challenging the societal structures injustice is rooted in. However, throughout the course of my study I found the concept of justice to be much more complex, especially when applying it to school leadership.

       The participants in my study defined social justice in terms of equitable distribution, appearing to fall in line with Rawl's (1971) definition of the term. However, my analysis revealed their practices and values surrounding social justice were much more complex. A deeper analysis revealed leaders implemented multiple forms of justice in their everyday school practices. Although their actions could best be explained using the lens of distributive justice, they recognized societal injustices existed and knew equitable access was not enough to rectify it. When participants spoke about environmental injustices, theories of epistemic justice best

explained the practices they used to address them. Participants also recognized the role their personal biases played in the continuation of injustice, and were willing to overcome those biases by including those with differing perspectives in their decision making processes; demonstrating concepts of epistemic injustice as presented by Fricker (1998), and McConkey (2004). Finally, my participants recognized injustice was perpetuated through systems of oppression and domination, and believed injustice would continue until these root systems were addressed; even if they did not take on the responsibility themselves. This reflected Young's (1990) definition of social justice. These findings highlight the complexities of defining justice, and discovering a way to successfully promote it.

Theories explaining the causes of societal injustices have been applied to education, but were not originally postulated with the goal of examining injustices in schools. Although these lens have been applied to education to better explain why injustices in education persist, alone these definitions may fail to fully capture the complexities involved in the structure of educational systems. Rather than simply using one lens of justice, researchers may better understand justice in education by creating a new lens; a lens of school justice. My findings suggest a blended lens; using portions of distributive justice, social justice, and epistemic justice may better capture the complexes of the reality of justice in schools.

Students arrive in schools with varying levels of access and opportunities due to socioeconomic differences at home. Therefore, school leaders must view injustice through a distributive lens to ensure all students have access to the same opportunities to level the playing field. Furthermore, leaders must be willing to question the unjust status quo exacerbating injustices in order to address structural injustices; exemplifying tenants of epistemic injustice and social justice research. Traditionally stand-alone lenses of justice have been applied to

understand injustice in schools. However, my findings suggest a blended lens of justice may be more appropriate to fully capture the complexities involved in the promotion of justice in schools: a theory of school justice.

Implications for Practice

While the implications for theory present a number of practical implications; such as questions regarding the impact of targeted remediation strategies, the autonomy school leaders have in setting procedures and policies for their schools, or the impact of having identical district wide goals for all schools; three implications come to the forefront for practitioners to consider. These implications include the extent to which current accountability measures accurately reflect levels of equity in schools, a question about who is creating accountability standards for equity, and the extent to which current educational leader training programs adequately prepare school leaders for social justice leadership.

Accurate measure. Accountability measures promoting equity have been a growing focus for the federal and state governments in recent decades (Shields, 2004; Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004; Linn, 2000). The goal of the Every Student Succeeds Act "is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps" (2015, p. 13). The Virginia Standards of Accreditation are also focused on increasing equity in schools. Evidence to demonstrate the attainment of these accountability measures is in the form of data gathered from students' standardized assessment scores; showing a narrowing achievement gap between minority and majority students (Shields, 2004; Skrla et al, 2001; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; ESSA, 2015). If educational leaders can provide data indicating the narrowing of this gap, they satisfy standards requiring them to be

equitable leaders. However, my findings imply the use of these quantitative measures may not adequately measure if social justice and equity has been attained.

The data revealed every leader I interviewed utilized end of course SOL test scores and gap group achievement data as the standard to measure their attainment of social justice and equity accreditation requirements. They reported using these measurements because the district and state use the same standards for accreditation purposes. Participants used the standard state requirements to set the baseline for their student achievement goals; but were clear this was just a baseline, and their personal goal was to surpass the scores required by the state.

Although every participant measured their success using student achievement data, they each also questioned the extent to which these measures adequately reflected the level of equity in the building. Mr. Riley poignantly commented test scores can only tell him how a student performs on a test. These measures fail to capture richer data shedding light on student perspectives and experiences. Using Young's (1990) definition of social justice: "…where social group differences exist and some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, social justice requires explicitly acknowledging and attending to those group differences in order to undermine oppression" (p. 3), I would argue a measurement of these experiences is quintessential to understanding if social justice has been attained. The data revealed many of my participants agreed, as they also incorporated qualitative measures, such as classroom observations and speaking with students, to clarify their personal understanding of justice in their schools.

Theoharis (2007) highlights the difficulty of defining social justice, because it can hold different meanings to different people. Due to this difficulty, historic accountability standards have also failed to adequately define, and therefore measure, if social justice is occurring in

schools (Karpinski & Lugg, 2006). Instead, these standards measure a leader based on their

maintenance of equity standards rather than social justice standards. This could be because

leaders can only be held accountable when standards are easily measureable (Klein, 1971).

Equity can be measured through the comparison of test scores, however social justice practices

are much more difficult to quantify. When performance goals are difficult to assess, they are

traditionally left out of accountability requirements because in order to measure the extent to

which a standard has been reached, it must be able to be defined and measurable (Klein, 1971).

Educational scholars argue the promotion of social justice is needed to truly end the inequalities

currently experienced in schools (Brown, 2004; Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, & Koschoreck, 2001,

Theoharis, 2007), however, my findings imply the standards used to measure student's equitable

experiences may fall short in adequately measuring if this is occurring.

     Listening to the voices of marginalized students. One of the premises of critical race

theory is counter storytelling. Counter storytelling allows those who have been traditionally

silenced to have their voices heard, builds community and consensus amongst those in minority

oppressed groups, and deconstructs an inequitable status quo (Aleman & Aleman, 2010, Delgado

& Stefancic, 2012). Researchers have presented the importance of listening to the voices of

those in minority groups during the creation of programs and policies to end injustice in order to

meet their needs as a group (Delpit, 1998; Auerbach, 2009; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002). My

findings suggest school leaders are willing to listen to students and parents at the local level,

however there is little evidence this is occurring at levels where policies are made. However, it

also reveals school leaders maintain their dominance over which voices they will listen to and

which they will not, as invited community members to the table on their terms.

My research revealed state standards and policies had a major influence on the goals implemented in schools; therefore it is important those who are creating equity policies understand the needs of those they are written to help. The way a problem is defined influences the types of policies created and implemented to address it (Tate, 1997). Those who have the most power are the ones who get to frame what problems are import enough to be dealt with through the creation of policy (Fowler, 2013). Those who have the voice are the ones who get to set the policies addressing the problem, based on their values, beliefs, and understandings (Fowler, 2013). However, my findings imply the policies created on the state level may fail to address the needs of those they are designed to help. This may be due to the demographics of those in power who have the voice to create these policies.

Adequate Training. Matias (2013) wrote extensively about the importance of white teacher candidates understanding, and accepting the systemic injustices prevalent in society before they enter the classroom. She believes teachers can unknowingly perpetuate injustices if they have not been made to admit and address their own biases created in a world of white dominance (Matias, 2013). School leaders cannot overcome institutional injustice without the "…knowledge, skills, desire, and capacity to address such issues…" (Smith, 2005).   I argue this statement can be applied to anyone entering into an educational position; including future school leaders. Since scholars stress the necessity of social justice leadership to end systemic inequities, (Brown, 2004; Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, & Koschoreck, 2001, Theoharis, 2007). All school leaders should have adequate knowledge and training on the subject before entering into a leadership position. However, my findings imply this is not the case.

My findings revealed my participants observed a lack of success when it came to the promotion of social justice in schools.   The primary reasons for this lack of success was a lack

of understanding about social justice and a lack of efficacy in implementing social justice

practices. Leaders struggled to define social justice; some even doubting if it was a term that

could be used in education. Most reverted to the term "equity" in our discussions about social

justice. This could be due to the lack of social justice training leaders receive in their training

programs. A tertiary analysis of Educational Leadership programs offered in colleges in Virginia

revealed few required future school leaders to take classes in social justice; only two out of

fourteen programs.

Participants who were the most comfortable and confident speaking about their role as a

social justice leader were either currently, or had recently been enrolled in PhD programs

requiring courses in social justice. These participants also noted their social justice classes had

influenced much of their practices, and caused them to understand their role as a leader in a new

light. This finding implies the importance of increasing social justice training for future school

leaders, no matter what their educational level.

Shared Responsibility. My findings highlighted the extensive influence central office

administrators have on the development of school wide goals. Each of my participants noted

their goals were developed by central office administrators, and reflected accreditation

requirements developed by the Virginia Department of Education. Success or failure to attain

school wide goals was predominately based on data from state standardized tests. This findings

suggest the importance for school leaders at all levels to recognize they have a shared

responsibility in ensuring social justice in schools. Klein, (1971) recognized school leaders are

more likely to engage in activities they are evaluated on. Since central office administrators play

an important role in setting district goals, they will increase the chance social justice practices

will occur if they write goals in a way to promote those behaviors in school leaders.

Although current state accountability standards measure equity through a comparison of gap group test scores, all school administrators must understand they have a greater responsibility to their students. While my participants understood the successful promotion of social justice required environmental changes, their primary focus remained on student test scores; as test scores were used to evaluate their success. If leaders are expected to promote social justice on a systemic level, they will need assistance and guidance from central office administrators to determine what practices and policies promote social justice, rather than those to simply promote increased test scores. Scholars like Au (2009), Frederiksen (1984), Shepard, (1991), Klein (1971), and Lauen & Gaddis, (2016) suggests a focus on test scores results in schools teaching basic knowledge so students can pass a test, rather than focusing on improving environments and structures that may exacerbate unjust experiences for students.

Implications for Future Research

Most research on social justice leadership has been conducted on leaders and measured using student test scores or gap group graduation rate. However, theories posit the importance of giving those in traditionally marginalized a voice, and including their experiences and perspectives in the study of social justice (Delpit, 1988; Fricker, 1998; McConkey, 2004). For future researchers to gain a better understanding of the impact of social justice leadership, they should investigate social justice through the perspective of those whom socially just practices are designed to help. Mrs. Wallace highlighted the importance of this type of research when she learned many of her social justice programs had failed, after speaking directly with the students they were designed to help. Future researcher can better learn about the impact of social justice leadership by listening to the experiences of those who are being impacted most by it.

Little research has been conducted on the role students' play in decision making processes in schools. When I asked my participants how their students would define them, all seven hoped their students recognized they were cared about and felt validated. In practice, my participants maintained open door policies, and made an effort to frequently check in with students in formal and informal ways. However, my study did not explore the extent to which students were part of school-wide decisions on a regular basis. Delpit (1988) suggests minority voices are silenced when it comes to the creation of policies designed to promote equity. This results in programs that fail to help those they are designed to benefit (Shields, 2004; Bogotch, 2000; Theoharis, 2008, Au, 2013; Delpit, 1988). Gaining deeper insights about the extent to which students are involved in school-wide decision making processes will allow future researchers to better understand the experiences of students; the stakeholders school wide policies and procedures are designed for. School leaders who include students in decisions about equity may increase the chances policies are informed by the voices of those who are traditionally marginalized.

Future researchers should also explore the extent to which school leaders are prepared for social justice leadership. My findings imply there is not enough training in leadership programs, however a more thorough analysis is needed to fully understand the impact current leadership training programs are having. Future researchers could compare the practices and beliefs leaders have about social justice, and measure the impact their leadership training programs have had on their successful promotion of social justice in their schools.

Conclusion

Social justice leaders "make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their

advocacy, leadership practice, and vision" (Theoharis, 2007, p. 223). In the current social and

political climate, it is increasingly important for leaders to promote social justice in their schools.

Despite the increasing focus of state and federal accountability standards on equitable practices,

current statistics do not reflect students have equally just experiences in the classroom. It was

the purpose of this study to understand, within the context of the accountability climate, school

leaders' espoused beliefs about social justice, and the practices they employ to those ends. Using

the dual lenses of epistemic injustice and critical race theory, in this qualitative research study, I

sought to understand the complex bidirectional and reciprocal relationship between the

accountability climate and school leaders' espoused beliefs and practices regarding social justice.

After analyzing my interview and observation data I had three initial findings, and one

final finding. I discovered school leaders believed social justice was a concern, however struggle

with their role in eradicating societal injustices. Some of these struggles were due to a lack of

understanding about social justice and social justice practices, while other struggles came from a

lack of authority in setting socially just goals. I discovered leaders were more comfortable

discussing equity when compared to social justice, due to a more thorough understanding of the

concept. In this study I sought out to understand the complex bidirectional and reciprocal

relationship between the accountability climate and school leaders' espoused beliefs and

practices regarding social justice. My findings indicated how complex that relationship is in the

way it influenced their practices of social justice, and also their understanding of what it means

to be a social justice leader.

I discovered various influences leaders had when it came to their beliefs and practices of

social justice. Interestingly, their beliefs were influenced by personal experiences they had with

injustice, creating a drive to eradicate it. However, their practices were more influenced by state and federal accountability standards impacting their schools' continued accreditation.

My final initial discovery was how little influence school leaders had on the goals for their school. Goals were primarily set by the district, which was influenced by state and federal accountability requirements. These requirements stressed equity, and were measured with standardized assessment scores and gap group data.

After comparing my initial findings, I came across one final discovery. There was a schism between leaders' personal beliefs and unofficial practices when it came to social justice and the official practices required by central office supervisors. Although participants believed social justice was "always an issue," according to Mr. John, they struggled to understand the role they should play in ending the cycle. I argue this is due to low efficacy, potentially due to lack of training and knowledge on the subject. Leaders focus their efforts to meet accreditation requirements, while knowing their practices may not be what is best for their students.

I leave you with a quote from one of my participants, Mr. John. When he was reflecting on his own social justice practices he worried if in the current state of accountability, "…we stop thinking of [kids] as… people; and they become…students, and they're not people." If leaders are going to be successful in the promotion of social justice, we need to remember students are more than simply their quantifiable scores, and better understand the impact we are having on their everyday lives and experiences.

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APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Document

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

PROJECT TITLE: THE IMPACT OF STATE EQUITY STANDARDS ON LEADERS' ESPOUSED BELIEFS ABOUT SOCIAL JUSTICE

INTRODUCTION
The purposes of this form are to give you information that may affect your decision whether to say YES or NO to participation in this research, and to record the consent of those who say YES. In this study you will be asked to take part in 2-3 half hour interviews about social justice and equity. You may also be asked to be part of an observation of a team meeting focusing on equity or social justice.

RESEARCHERS
Responsible Project Investigator: Dr. Steve Myran; Associate Professor & Chair Educational Foundations & Leadership. Darden College of Education, Old Dominion University
Investigator: Amanda Hadgraft; Graduate Student, Darden College of Education, Old Dominion University

DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH STUDY
Several studies have been conducted indicating there continues to be inequity in schools despite decades of programs designed to increase social justice. However, few have explored the extent to which these programs effectively influence leaders to act in socially just ways. The purpose of this study is to understand, within the context of the accountability climate, school leaders' espoused beliefs and practices about social justice.

If you choose to participate, then you will join a study involving research of social justice. You will be asked to take part in a series of interviews exploring the formation of your social justice beliefs, and the practices you use to create an equitable school environment for all students. If you say YES, then your participation will last for the duration of 2-3 half hour interviews at your school. Approximately 4-6 other school leaders will also be participating in this study.

EXCLUSIONARY CRITERIA
You are eligible to take part in this study if you have served in your current leadership position for at least three consecutive school years.

RISKS AND BENEFITS
There are little to no risks involved in taking part in this study. Interview questions will ask you to examine your beliefs and practices of social justice, which has the potential to cause some discomfort; however if any discomfort occurs you will have the right to refrain from answering any question. The researcher will try to reduce this risks by maintaining full confidentiality of all participants by removing all linking identifiers of the participant, as well as the school and district they work in. The researcher will also agree to end any line of questioning which may cause discomfort. The main benefit to you for participating in this study is that you will have the ability to reflect on your own beliefs and practices of equity and social justice in your building.

COSTS AND PAYMENTS
The researchers want your decision about participating in this study to be absolutely voluntary. I recognize that your participation may pose some inconveniences and take some of your time. Your time and participation are appreciated, unfortunately, the researcher is unable to give you any payment for participating in the study. However, the researcher will travel to where it is most convenient for you to conduct interviews in order to limit inconveniences.

NEW INFORMATION
If the researcher finds new information during this study that would reasonably change your decision about participating, then they will give it to you, and give you the opportunity to withdraw from the study.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The researchers will take reasonable steps to keep information obtained about you totally confidential, unless disclosure is required by law via subpoena. The researcher will remove identifiers, of you, as well as the school and district you work for, from the information written. The researcher will destroy all tapes created and store all transcripts in a locked filing cabinet prior to processing. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, and publications; but the researcher will not identify you.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE
It is OK for you to say DELINE being part of this research study. Even if you AGREE now, you are free to say NO later, and walk away or withdraw from the study   at any time. Your decision will not affect your relationship with Old Dominion University, or otherwise cause a loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled.

COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS AND INJURY
If you say YES, then your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of harm arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to give you any money, insurance coverage, free medical care, or any other compensation for such injury. In the event that you suffer injury as a result of participation in any research project, you may contact Amanda Hadgraft at: (631) 766-2099, Dr. Laura C. Chezan, the current IRB chair, at 757-683 7055 at Old Dominion University or at lchezan@odu.edu , or the Old Dominion University Office of Research at 757-683-3460 who will be glad to review the matter with you.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT
By signing this form, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form or have had it read to you, that you are satisfied that you understand this form, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, then the researchers should be able to answer them:

Amanda Hadgraft (631) 766-2099

If at any time you feel pressured to participate, or if you have any questions about your rights or this form, then you should contact Dr. Laura C. Chezan, the current IRB chair, at 757-683 7055 at Old Dominion University or at lchezan@odu.edu , or the Old Dominion University Office of Research at 757-683-3460.

And importantly, by signing below, you are telling the researcher YES, that you agree to participate in this study. The researcher should give you a copy of this form for your records.

Subject's Printed Name & Signature	**Date**
Parent / Legally Authorized Representative's Printed Name & Signature (If applicable)	**Date**
Witness' Printed Name & Signature (if Applicable)	**Date**

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocols

Primary Interview Questions

Questions	Answered in #__ order
1) How would you define leadership?	
2) What do you believe are the primary roles and responsibilities of a school leader?	
3) What makes a good leader? Successful Leader? Are they the same?	
4) How do you create school wide goals? What informs the creation of these goals? – Possible touch on – stakeholder involvement/ barriers	
5) How do you measure the attainment of your school wide goals?	

Follow-up Interview Prompts – Probing further details from the first interview

In our first conversation, you talked about several things that I wanted to follow up with you on. Could you tell me a little bit more about:

Topic A

Topic B

Topic C

Based on the above discussion consider probing on the following:

1) Given what you just talked about
   a) How would define social justice?
   b) How about an equitably school
2) How would you measure this?
3) More narrowly, how might that (what the research participant talked about) be related to
   a) social justice leadership?
   b) the characteristics a leader should have if they want to call themselves a social justice leader?
   c) The factors that promote equity in schools and how you would measure or prove that there is equity?
4) What barriers do you think a leader would face when acting socially just?

Follow-Up Interview Questions

Questions	Answered in #__ order
1) How do you determine if students are learning/ how do you measure their success or failure?	
2) Are goals about equity and social justice included in these goals? If so how is that measured?	
3) (If used to measure equity) How do you utilize the data gained from statewide testing? /What are your feelings about statewide testing and the data gathered from them?	
4) How do you know if your students are learning equally?	
5) How do you measure if students have equal access to learning?	

Follow-up Interview Prompts – Probing further details from the first interview

In our first conversation, you talked about several things that I wanted to follow up with you on. Could you tell me a little bit more about:

Topic A

Topic B

Topic C

Based on the above discussion consider probing on the following:

1) Given what you just talked about
    a. How would define social justice?
    b. How about an equitably school
2) How would you measure this?
3) More narrowly, how might that (what the research participant talked about) be related to
    a. social justice leadership?
    b. the characteristics a leader should have if they want to call themselves a social justice leader?
    c. The factors that promote equity in schools and how you would measure or prove that there is equity?
4) What barriers do you think a leader would face when acting socially just?

Final Interview Questions

Questions	Answered in #__ order
1) What do you believe is a school leader's responsibility when it comes to social justice?	
2) How would you define social justice leader?	
3) Do you think you are successful in implementing social justice/ equity goals? If so what are they?	
4) How do you determine if these goals have been met? What informs them?	
5) What do you credit with influencing you on your beliefs and practices when it comes to social justice?	
6) What barriers do you have when it comes to the implementation of school wide goals about social justice?	
7) What is your biggest social justice success/ win?	
8) How do you measure if students have equal access to learning?	

Ask about the focus on the achievement gap and if it was an issue/goal – esp with new standards

Follow-up Interview Prompts – Probing further details from our previous interviews

In our first conversations, you talked about several things that I wanted to follow up with you on. Could you tell me a little bit more about:

Topic A:

Topic B:

Topic C:

Topic D:

Based on the above discussion consider probing on the following:

1) Given what you just talked about
   a) How would define social justice?
   b) How about an equitably school
2) How would you measure this?
3) More narrowly, how might that (what the research participant talked about) be related to
   a. social justice leadership?
   b. the characteristics a leader should have if they want to call themselves a social justice leader?
   c. The factors that promote equity in schools and how you would measure or prove that there is equity?
4) What barriers do you think a leader would face when acting socially just?

APPENDIX C

Observation Protocol

Participant:_____   Observation Time:_____
Setting:_____   Location:_____
Brief Description of Setting *(Including reason for observed gathering, number of participants, description of the physical setting, positions of involved participants)*

Observable Behavior: Stakeholder Input *IE: Uses stakeholder (student, staff, families, community members) input to drive decision making/ policy creation, change, and/or implementation*
Description of Behavior: **Number of times observed:**
Spectrum ▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬▬

No Evident Stakeholder Input Recognized	**Stakeholder Input Unintentionally Recognized**	**Stakeholder Input Informs Decisions**

Observable Behavior: Behaviors/ Attitudes Around Accountability Testing and/or Standards

IE: Discussions about standardized assessments and/or accountability testing/ Decisions made based on standardized assessments and/or accountability testing/ Evidence standardized assessment data drives decision making

Description of Behavior:

Number of times observed:

Spectrum

Testing & Standards Have Little Focus	Moderate Focus on Testing & Standards	Testing & Standards Primary Focus

Observable Behavior: Leadership Decision Making *IE: Decisions and/or conversations about policy implementation or change/ Decisions made focus on the promotion of learning for all students/ Decisions based on stakeholder input*
Description of Behavior: **Number of times observed:**
Spectrum ━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━━ **Little Consideration of**   **Some Consideration of**   **Frequent Purposeful** **All Stakeholders/ Students**   **All Stakeholders/ Students**   **Consideration of All**   **Stakeholders/ Students**

Observable Behavior: Data Driven Decisions
IE: Discussions about data/ making decisions based on the use of data
Description of Behavior: **Number of times observed:**
Spectrum

Data Does Not Influence Decisions	Data Informs Decisions	Data Primarily Impacts Decisions

| **Observable Behavior: Other Behaviors** |
| *IE: Behaviors/ actions not falling in prior categories* |
| **Description of Behavior:** |
| |

APPENDIX D

Code Book

Themes	Definition
Beliefs About Social Justice	Personal beliefs the leader has when it comes to Social Justice
Influences	External and internal factors which shape beliefs and practices of SJ
Goals	The desired effect of the leader's actions
Beliefs Vs. Actions	Participants beliefs were influenced by internal factors; actions by external

Beliefs About Social Justice	Meaning/Keywords
Codes for Beliefs About Social Justice	
Definition	The leaders understanding of what social justice means in a school
Lack of Success	Leader's believed many are unsuccessful at truly promoting social justice in their schools
Role of the Leader	The role leaders believed they should play in promoting social justice
Sub code for Definitions	
Interdependence with Equity	Leaders were more comfortable talking about equity Each believed social justice was a category in which practices of equity fell under Social Justice: Takes place outside of the school and is the outcome Equity: The practices leaders can do in the school related to access
Confusion	Leaders had a difficult time defining the term They were more comfortable with the concept of equity
Multifaceted	Leaders agreed social justice means ensuring students from all "gap groups" – black/white, male/female, low SES/ high SES, SWD – are able to find success
Sub code for Unsuccessful	
Lack of Efficacy	Some leaders believed they had failed in promoting Social Justice, others saw failures in other leaders One of belief they could do it
Traditional Systems	Leaders believed the systems of education itself made it difficult to have success in social justice
Sub code for Role of the Leader	
Model	Leaders believed they needed to model Social Justice Practices
Community involvement	They needed to get to know the needs of the community Create systems for the community/with the community
Voice/Advocate/Listener	Listen to the students and meet their needs Be a voice for the students

Influences	Meaning/Keywords
Codes for Influences	
Internal	Personal values and traits that shaped their beliefs and practices
External	Outside experiences and forces shaping their beliefs and practices
Sub code External	
Experiences	Personal and professional experiences they have throughout their careers that have shaped their beliefs and practices
Stakeholders	Listening to the needs of student and parents which have shaped their beliefs and practices
Accountability	Outside standards and requirements from the division that have shaped their beliefs and practices
Micro Code for Experiences	
Professional	School, Reading, Previous Jobs
Personal	Personal experiences that shaped their understanding of social justice

Goals	Meaning/Keywords
Codes for Goals	
Focus (Not a code – but discuss in intro the is section)	What the goals are – Achievement, Accreditation, SWD, Close Gap, Attendance, Advanced Course Enrollment
Influences	What influenced the making of the goals
Practices	Practices to attain goals
Measure	Measure of goal attainment
Sub code Influences	
Accountability Standards	The standards are the baseline for the goals
District	The district tells the leader what goals to set
Sub code Practices	
Targeted Attendance	Use of attendance coach/ monitoring attendance
Targeted Remediation	Educational triage – helping bubble students
Data	Constantly checking data to understand where they are in meeting the goal
Increasing Equity of Access	Focus on equity of access of materials, resources, food, transportation – tangible items

Participant Key	
Participant	*Pseudonym in paper*
Participant A	Mr. John
Participant B	Mr. Wells
Participant C	Mr. Northam
Participant D	Mrs. Wallace
Participant E	Mr. Riley
Participant F	Mr. Smith
Participant G	Mr. Scott

VITA

Amanda Hadgraft

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Darden College of Education & Professional Studies
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Amanda Hadgraft has worked as a public high school teacher in Suffolk, Virginia for seven years; and is a doctoral candidate at Old Dominion University. She has served as the social studies department chair for the past three years, and has served as a member of the school leadership team for five years.

Education

Ph.D.   Education, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia, 2019

EDS   Education Specialist, Educational Leadership, Old Dominion
                 University, Norfolk May 2018

M.Ed.   Master of Social Studies Education, Hofstra University, Hempstead, May 2012,
                 New York

B.F.A.   Bachelor of Arts, History and Secondary Education, Providence College,
                 Providence, Rhode Island, May 2010

Licenses

Virginia Administrative Certification: K-12 Leadership

Teacher Certification: Grades 6-12

Professional Experience

2015-Present Department Chair, Social Studies Department, King's Fork High School,
                 Suffolk VA

Publications and Conference Papers:

Hadgraft, A., (2019). *The impact of state equity standards on leaders' espoused beliefs about
          social justice* (Doctoral dissertation).

Amanda Hadgraft & Steve Myran (2019), *State Equity Standards Impacts on Leaders Espoused
          Beliefs About Social Justice*, **University Council for Educational Administration
          Annual Convention,** New Orleans, LA.