ABSTRACT

Title of Document:	PRINCIPALS LEADING FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY: SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ACTION

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Doctor of Education, 2012

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This qualitative case study examined how principals promote educational equity in schools.. The study examined the experiences of three principals in a school district that mandated that principals lead for equity. The school system defined equity as the elimination of racial predictability in student achievement. To conduct this examination, the researcher conducted an analysis of transcripts from semi- structured interviews. The study's findings overview four conditions that are commonly promoted by principals to address inequities within their schools: leadership for equity, an equity focus, equity enhancing practices and structures. The findings from this case study added to current knowledge about the need for an equity plan model that principals can apply in planning and leading for educational equity in their schools. Studying how principals promote educational equity in schools proved a significant way to learn about how today's schools address inequities facing African American and Hispanic students. The study also added to current knowledge about social justice in education, as the foundation for educational equity work. Suggestions for further research include: investigating principals leading for

educational equity in a district that did not mandate this idea; further comparison studies with the principal as the primary unit of analysis; including teacher and student perceptions would be beneficial. Research that provides further description of the experiences of principals working to become leaders in educational equity will extend our professional knowledge on this topic.

PRINCIPALS LEADING FOR EDUCATIONAL EQUITY:
SOCIAL JUSTICE IN ACTION

By
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Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
2012

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Acknowledgements

Thank you to my husband for his love and unwavering support of me, our family, and my academic pursuits. Thank you to my children for their love and understanding. Thank you to my parents for their support, love, and encouragement; and for raising me to believe I could affect change in the world. You both taught me that every person is worthy of respect and to embrace people's differences. Thank you to Denise for your friendship, support, and our helpful debrief sessions throughout this journey. Without my family's love, support, and encouragement, this dream would not have been possible.

Thank you to my cohort colleagues, especially my friend, Amy Alonso, who has encouraged and supported me from day one of our administrative program. Also, thank you to my many district colleagues--who are too numerous to mention--for your support along the journey.

I would like to acknowledge my committee at the University of Maryland for their expertise and high standards of academic excellence.

Finally, I would like thank Dr. Hanne Mawhinney, for her encouragement. Without your support and guidance, this would not have been possible. Your patience and unwavering support have meant so much to me along this journey.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter One: Overview

Introduction

The concept of social justice has evolved since its initial introduction into society in the late 18ᵗʰ century (Jackson, 2005). Some theorists believe that the concept of social justice developed in the time of Plato, who believed that the ideal society was the result of the interplay between the four concepts of wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice (Rawls, 1971). As history has evolved, so has the concept of social justice. Contemporary definitions of social justice have centered on ensuring civil rights, defining the practice of law, empowering leadership, addressing education issues, and eliminating inequalities.

Webster's Dictionary defined justice as "the maintenance or administration of what is just especially by the impartial adjustment of conflicting claims or the assignment of merited rewards or punishments" (Merriam-Webster, 2009). This definition has served as the building block of our judicial system and is a key component of the specific laws that govern today's society. Despite the widely accepted nature of this definition, in reality, social justice is a concept that is far less precise in its meaning and application.

The values of social justice have roots in religion, law, and philosophy; and contribute to the definition and employment of this concept in today's society. In its simplest form, social justice focuses on achieving justice in every aspect of society and ensuring a fair and equal division of burdens and rewards within the communities in which we live. The concept, first present in early Christian writings, has been refined over the centuries to reflect social evolution and accommodate the changing face of formal and informal social, political, and economic institutions. Today, social justice is associated primarily with the work of John Rawls. According to Rawls (1971), social

justice acknowledges that "each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override and for this reason justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others" (p. 3).

The concept was pivotal in the civil rights movements of the late 1800s and early to mid-1900s, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the resulting amendments to the Constitution. These laws have impacted many aspects of our daily activities and social behavior. Within the educational system, *Brown v. Board of Education (BOE)* is a prime example of social justice in action because it attempted to address an inequity within the educational system. In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."

Background

Within the United States educational system, social injustice continues to impact the performance and future abilities of a large percentage of students in this country. The inequities that exist in our educational system have created a racial achievement and opportunity gap. According to Paige (2010), across centuries, African-American students, in particular, have experienced a "deliberate and debilitating opportunity gap" (p. 95). A similar gap exists for students of Hispanic origin.

These gaps have created educational inequities for both African-American and Hispanic students who historically have been marginalized by the United States educational system. As a result, systemic racial educational disparities have developed and led to unequal opportunities, denied access, inequitable resource allocation, and lowered expectations for students in these populations (Singleton, 2008). Despite the relevance of these educational inequities to the overall concept of social justice, little

research exists that focuses on how to create educational equity for African-American and Hispanic students in schools in the United States. Numerous studies document the existence of this inequity and the need for change in our educational system (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Skrla, McKenzie & Scheurich, 2009; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Singleton & Linton, 2006; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Berlak, 2001).

In 2000, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) trend data showed that by the end of grade 12, the reading and math skills of many African-American and Latino students equaled those of White students at the end of middle school. The most recent NAEP trend data released in 2008 showed some progress by African-Americans students. However, this progress was due to the 4-year lag between the two test administrations, which was longer than normal (NAEP, 2008). Even across the highest-performing school systems in the United States, educational inequity is a contributing factor to the low performance of students from certain racial backgrounds. The next section addresses the relationship between educational equity and social justice.

Leadership for Educational Equity

Social justice is the foundational concept for educational equity, as social justice addresses disparities (Marshall & Olivia, 2006) in all areas (education, housing, employment, admissions, etc.). Educational equity specifically addresses the disparities students experience in schools. In this study, I specifically examined the inequities experienced by African-American and Hispanic students in the United Stated education system.

To achieve educational equity, we must frame everyday education as a daily civil rights project and provide equal opportunities within our educational system to children

of color (Pollock, 2006). We should consider a lack of equal educational opportunities for all children a violation of a student's civil and human rights. Educational leaders must work towards inspiring educators towards this civil rights issue and translating that inspiration into action so that we can collectively work towards achieving the goal of providing equal educational opportunities for African-American and Hispanic students. We must then move from access to actual documented increases in student performance.

Context

This study took place in Mapleton School District, a public school district in a metropolitan area on the east coast of the United States. Mapleton School District made equity a system-wide goal. Mapleton School District's renewed emphasis on educational equity for African-American and Hispanic students coincided with the federal mandate of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to address the achievement gap for students in the aforementioned populations. Research suggests that a school cannot have systemic equity if disparities and social injustice exist in any part of the system (Scott, 2001). Although recent research has established the link between educational equity and social justice, a need still exists for further research to help us move beyond rhetoric to translate theory into action (Theoharis, 2010).

At the time of this study, the Mapleton School District included 200 schools: 131 elementary schools, 38 middle schools, 25 high schools, 1 career and technology center, and 5 special schools. Enrollment data by race for the 144,064 students in the district was as follows (Our call to action, 2008):

- White: 34.6% (49,795 students),
- Hispanic: 25.3% (36,433 students),

- African-American: 21.3% (30,720 students),

- Asian: 14.3% (20,573 students),

- 2 or more races: 4.3% (6,228 students); and

- Indian: .2% (233 students).

Of these students, (1) 30.7% participated in Free and Reduced Price Meals System (FARMS); (2) 13.0% participated in English for Speakers of Other languages (ESOL), and (3)11.1% received special education services. In addition, the district comprised of students from 164 countries speaking 184 languages. The school district had struggled with achieving educational equity for all students and had mandates in place from the superintendent and Board of Education to reduce the disproportionality for Hispanic and African American students in the district.

Research Problem

A review of existing literature revealed limited research linking social justice and student achievement (Urban, 2008), and even fewer studies examined the role of the principal in establishing educational equity. Muttillo (2008) focused on elementary schools of excellence, and recommended that studies on educational equity be conducted at secondary levels also. In 2010, Chisnall researched the relationship between social justice and academic achievement at the middle school level. Chisnall (2010) also stated that "even with the emerging literature on social justice leadership in schools and increased achievement for all students, there remains limited research with the principal as the unit of analysis" (p. 7). Urban (2008) argued

> It would be of great importance to replicate this study at the middle and high school level. This would provide school leaders empirical evidence and proven strategies that promote excellence and equity throughout all levels of our educational system. Understanding the differences and similarities at these three

distinct levels achieving success for all students would help district leaders create and implement a synergistic plan for excellence and equity. (p. 177)

As educators work towards the goal of educational equity for all students, we must understand the steps principals take to eliminate disparities in their schools. Several researchers have identified social justice as a key educational issue in this effort (McNaulty, 2011; Chisnall, 2010; Christman, & Hernandez, 2008; Kose, 2007; Dantley, 2006; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; McKenzie, Skrla & Scheurich, 2001). Other studies have found that school leadership plays a vital role in ensuring educational equity (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Johnson, 2004; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Larbi 2003; Marzano, Waters & McNaulty, 2003; Fullan 2002). While these studies concede that school leaders play an important role in eliminating disparities, they do not examine the specific *ways* that principals impact educational equity.

We must study leaders that "interrogate the policies & procedures that shape schools and at the same time perpetuate the social inequalities and marginalization due to race or other factors (Marshall & Olivia, 2008, p. 26). Johnson (2009) agreed that studying leaders is critical and stated the following:

> In today's milieu where there is increasing interest in staking out the theory and practice of leadership for social justice, stories of school leaders from different geographic regions and historical periods who 'make a difference' for culturally diverse students and their families can help establish a historical continuum for democratic and socially just leadership practice across contexts. (p. 279-280)

McNaulty (2011) acknowledged that we need research that moves into studying practice beyond a theoretical level. As Johnson (2009) argued, in addition to the theories that describe social justice leadership interactions:

> School leaders need models of how they might challenge the status quo of inequitable assessment practices, incorporate students' cultural knowledge in the

school curriculum, and work with parents and community activists for social change in the larger community, (p. 280).

This study addressed the issues of linking social justice and student achievement by examining the role of the principal in establishing educational equity.

Purpose

Under the mandate defined by the Mapleton district superintendent, and supported by the Board of Education, principals must address the call for social justice by leading for equity and excellence in their schools. However, few studies outline a clear model that principals could use when developing plans to increase educational equity. As such, the principals studied have developed their own processes and plans to meet the district superintendent's mandate.

This study describes the approaches that participating principals' adopted to promote educational equity within their school and examines how effectively some of these approaches met the overall goal of achieving equal access to high-quality educational services for all children, regardless of their ethnic background and color. This study focused on those principals who move beyond the rhetoric to make educational equity a reality.

Research Question

The central research question guiding this study was:

- How do principals promote educational equity in schools?

Conceptual Framework

In this study, the conceptual framework built upon the work of both McNaulty (2011) and Brown, K., Benkovitz, J., Muttilo, A. & Urban, T. (2011). Each of these

works provided a useful lens through which we can view social justice leadership and efforts to employ educational equity to reduce achievement gaps.

Social justice indicators. I employed McNaulty's (2011) overview of social justice leadership and the indicators of social justice he identified in K-12 education. These indicators represent leadership skills frequently found among school administrators who successfully developed into social justice leaders.

Closing the achievement gap. The work of Brown et al. (2011) contributed a framework for examining strategies proven effective in closing achievement gaps. Their work focused on principals who confronted and changed practices that were injustices for African American and Hispanic students. I will discuss the conceptual framework further in chapter 2.

Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 presents a review of research and scholarship on social justice and educational equity, an examination of existing literature on leadership, and a description of research on leading for educational equity. Chapter 3 imparts a detailed account of the methods used to conduct the study, my rationale for employing qualitative methods, and an overview of the coding process. In chapter 4, I describe the demographics of the study participants and their schools, and I present case descriptions of each of three principals' practices in leading for educational equity. In chapter 5, I report the results of the cross-case analysis and define the similarities and differences between the case studies. In chapter 6, I present the summary of the findings, discussion of the findings, recommendations for further research, implications for policy and practice, and conclusions.

Potential Significance

This inquiry was significant because it added to the limited research on educational equity. The results of this study will provide key data that can inform theory, policy, and practice within the educational system. According to North (2008), we need to "continue questioning, and expanding our knowledge claims about, and actions for social justice" (p. 1201).

By highlighting the need for increased accountability, additional policies, and the use of professional development plans for principals, the study contributes to research on how principals lead for educational equity. This work also highlights processes and plans that principals have implemented successfully to address the issue of educational injustice. According to Scheurich and Skrla (2003), "The success of our society will soon be directly dependent on our ability as educators to be successful with children of color, with whom we have not been very successful in the past" (p. 5).

Findings of the study also will contribute to the efforts of institutions of higher education to develop strategies specifically focused on increasing capacities for leading for educational equity. These findings provide considerations for improved practice and can guide principals in their efforts to lead for educational equity.

Researcher Perspective

As a former elementary school teacher and secondary assistant principal, I am familiar with the important role that principals play in leading for educational equity, both within their school's classrooms and among the leadership and school community. In my current central office role in my school district, I believe that I can be instrumental in promoting and implementing the theories and concepts of leading for educational

equity on both an individual and a systemic basis. This commitment has promoted and maintained my passion for this field of research. All educators play a role in achieving social justice and this study gave me the opportunity to examine how principals effectively achieve educational equity by putting social justice in action to address disparities in educational opportunities.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are foundational concepts in this study. These definitions are included to provide clarity and consistency and to establish a common vocabulary for the reader in the context of this research study. The following descriptions are commonly accepted definitions found in existing literature.

Achievement Gap: The gap in achievement between African American and Hispanic students and their white and Asian peers. (Singleton & Linton, 2006).

Authentic Equity Leadership: Personally engaged, accountable and responsive leadership that assesses, honestly celebrates success, and urgently corrects inequities (Linton, 2008)

Cultural Identity: Culture is the aggregation of beliefs, attitudes, habits, values, and practices that form a view of reality. These patterns function as a filter through which a group or individual views and responds to the environment (Ford & Harris, 1999). We all actively construct and change culture and acquire parts of it through socialization. The only culture that remains static is a culture that has died (Henze et al., 2002).

Educational Equity: Raising the achievement of all students, while narrowing the gap between the highest and lowest performing students and eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and

lowest achievement categories (Singleton & Linton, 2006). Ensuring that all students receive the individual support they need to reach and exceed the common standard.

Excellence: All children achieve academically at uniformly high levels in safe, secure, and inclusive schools (Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson & Koschoreck, 2001).

Racial Achievement Gap: Although gaps in academic achievement also occur along the lines of mental and physical disability (special education students), language (English as a second language students), and economic status; this study will specifically focus on the racial achievement gap.

Race: Race is not biological; it is a socially constructed idea (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Smedley A. & Smedley B., 2005; Sternberg, Grigorenko & Kidd,. 2005; Begley, 1996; Witzig, 1996; King, 1995; Rensberger, 1990; Rose, Kamin, & Lewontin, 1984; Rogers, 1980; King, 1981).

Racial Identity: The development of a positive racial identity is a lifelong process that often requires an individual to unlearn the misinformation and stereotypes they have internalized about themselves and others. The manner in which schools acknowledge racial and ethnic identities will affect all students' educational experiences (Tatum, 2001).

Racism: Racism is the unjustified negative treatment and subordination of members of a racial or ethnic group and does not require intention (Pine & Hilliard, 1990, 595).

Relationship between Social Justice & Educational Equity: Educational equity is achieved through social justice in action. Social justice is the foundation for educational equity.

Social Justice: Skrla et al. (2001) explained that if social justice were truly present in an educational system, then children of all backgrounds, regardless of race, would benefit academically at uniformly high levels in school environments in which they are safe and secure, which would mean that school success would be equitable across such differences as race and …... (p. 240). Social justice is addressing and eliminating instances of marginalization in schools, with the principals' focus of "historically and currently marginalizing conditions central to their advocacy leadership, practice, and vision" (Theoharis, 2007, p. 224). In an attempt to address issues of equity, power relations, and institutionalized oppression, social justice seeks to establish a more equitable distribution of power and resources so that all individuals can live with dignity, self-determination, and physical and psychological safety. Social justice creates opportunities for people to reach their full potential within a mutually responsible, interdependent society (Goodman, 2001).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter was to present the literature around social justice, racial disparities in the United States educational system, educational equity, and the role that school leadership plays in each of these areas. The sections that follow commence with an explanation of the history of social justice. To put social justice in action, one first must understand its meaning, its historical role in society, and its use as a tool for addressing social, economic, and educational gaps within our society. In this chapter, I also explored leadership for social justice and educational equity and social justice as means of establishing educational equity in the United States school system. In the closing section of the chapter, I present research on the conceptual framework for this study, and examine existing literature on the use of social justice as a lens through which we can view efforts to lead for educational equity.

History of Educational Inequity in U.S. Education

Inequities have always existed in the United States educational system; and historically, children of color have been at a disadvantage, with limited access to educational resources and services. Their intellectual and other capabilities have been marginalized simply because of the color of their skin. The focus on education and social justice for African Americans in education actually started hundreds of years before the civil rights movement.

For more than 300 years, African Americans fought for the educational imperatives of access, equality, opportunity, freedom, and justice (Murtadha & Watts, 2005). Frederick Douglass (1894) asserted that to "deny education to any people is one of the greatest crimes against human nature." In 1787, Prince Hall opened a school for

Black children in his home and wrote one of the first public pleas for educational

opportunities and social justice:

> We… must fear for our rising offspring to see them in ignorance in a land of Gospel light, when there is provision made for them as well as others and they can't enjoy them, and no other reason can be given them that they are Black. (Public petition, Massachusetts legislature; Murtadha & Watts, 2005, p. 84, 594)

Over the course of the next 100 years, much remained unchanged until 1862,

when Frederick Douglass emphasized the need for educational equity by writing "we ask

nothing at the hands of American people but simple justice, and an equal chance to live."

In response, and despite the lack of legal backing; communities began to organize and

create schools, including colleges, established for, and led by, African-American people.

Throughout the next half century, African-American children were able to obtain a solid,

although segregated, education.

In an effort to maintain the momentum of this progress toward educational equity,

many African-American educational leaders, from W.E.B. Dubois to Mary McLeod

Bethune, linked the struggle for educational equity with social justice (Murtadha &

Watts, 2005). W.E.B. Dubois (1949, 1970) emphasized the right to education--not

guaranteed by the Constitution but expected from the states--in his writings:

> Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled and fought for 5,000 years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental.... The freedom to learn... has been bought by bitter sacrifice. And whatever we may think of the curtailment of other civil rights, we should fight to the last ditch to keep open the right to learn, the right to have examined in our schools not only what we believe, but what we do not believe; not only what our leaders say, but what the leaders of other groups and nations, and the leaders of other centuries have said. We must insist upon this to give our children the fairness of a start which will equip them with such an array of facts and such an attitude toward truth that they can have a real chance to judge what the world is and what its greater minds have thought it might be. (p. 230-231)

14

These efforts to promote equal access to education culminated in 1954, with the Supreme Court's ruling on *Brown v. BOE*. With this ruling, the Court sought to address educational inequities by outlawing segregated schools and ruling that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." Carroll and Fulton (2004) described the *Brown v. BOE* decision as a "promise that every child would have access to the same quality public education" (p. 4).

Despite the remarkable strides made by *Brown v. BOE* in opening the education system to African Americans, the ruling failed to address the myriad ways that students of color may be denied equal access to a quality education. Several researchers have noted that such access would not result from desegregated schools alone; educators needed to establish new avenues to learning opportunities typically denied to students of color (Espinoza, 2007; Pollock, 2006; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001). As a result, African-American, and later Hispanic, children were not able to reach the same levels of academic achievement as their White peers. Over fifty years after the *Brown* ruling, Dixson, Donnor, and Anderson (2011) argued that "racialized inequities persist" (p. 699).

Legislation Addressing Educational Inequities

Paige (2010) declared that the "black-white achievement gap is the primary civil rights issue of our time" (p. 20). Since desegregation made only partial improvements in the provision of equal access to resources, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 allocated new resources for professional development, instructional materials, parent involvement promotion, and supplemental educational programs. The Act also provided financial assistance to local educational agencies to educate children of lower-income families. Since 1965, the ESEA has gone through numerous

reauthorizations, including the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), which had a high focus on accountability.

The NCLB legislation aimed to ensure that principals and educators hold high expectations for all students; regardless of race, background, or socio-economic status. Rod Paige, the U.S. Secretary of Education in 2001, stated that under the new law, "we will strive to provide every boy and girl in America with a high-quality education-regardless of his or her income, ability, or background (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003, p. 6). For this legislation to impact the neediest students, NCLB's mandates needed to go beyond following a set of legal guidelines, to focus on the flawed belief systems held by teachers who assumed that all children could not reach mandated skill levels.

In 2010, at the time this study was conducted, annual yearly progress (AYP) was a major component of NCLB. NCLB used data across all sub-group areas to demonstrate that all children can learn. The goal of these accountability measures was to "reduce the systemic inequity in U.S. public schools" (Chisnall, 2010, p. 3). The AYP requirement of NCLB mandates that all children; regardless of income level, race, or language; meet standard levels of academic proficiency. By disaggregating data by race, NCLB has obtained a true picture of each district and school's progress toward attaining AYP. This level of accountability has helped school systems and their leadership, including superintendents and principals, make the changes necessary to enable all students to achieve their potential.

The government viewed NCLB as a major effort to increase educational equity. The law was an "explicit statement by the federal government that achievement gaps between white…. and children of color…. are unacceptable and must be eliminated"

(Skrla, McKenzie, & Scheurich, 2009, p. 4). Again, this study took place during the

height of NCLB implementation, as educators struggled to adhere to the federal mandate

that 100% of students achieve a level of academic proficiency by 2014.

Since President Obama released the "Blueprint for Reform" in March 2010 and its

update in the fall of 2011, districts have operated in ambiguity. Although the Mapleton

district is unsure when the federal government will reauthorize the ESEA or what the

possible assessment waivers for districts with multiple measures of reliable data may

mean, they can say with certainty that NCLB did not close the achievement gap in their

school system. The accountability that enforced through NCLB will not disappear with

NCLB relief efforts. States will need to demonstrate progress in a different way, with

comprehensive plans to raise standards. Clearly, the persistence of the achievement gap,

"especially for children of color, is a remnant of the civil rights movement" (Noguera &

Wing, 2006, p. 11).

Persistent Challenges to Equity in Education

The Equity Center website at Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (2009),

defined educational equity as "the elimination of discrimination in educational

institutions, programs, and curricula on the basis of race, national origin, or sex and of

those elements of role stereotyping and role socialization that prevent full and fair

participation by all student in educational programs." Numerous studies have shown that

educational equity includes a number of important components.

Inequities in fiscal resources. Carroll and Fulton (2004), for example, focused

on inadequate allocation of resources and placed a particular emphasis on financial

equity. The study's results also focused on disparities in teacher certification and

17

qualifications in schools that served poor children. Fusarelli (2004) questioned whether inadequate funding, coupled with a sole focus on test scores, would negate the progress some districts have made in equalizing educational opportunities for children of color.

        Inequities in bilingual education. Siegel (2007) and Lee (2003) investigated equitable assessments for linguistic minorities, while Villegas and Lucas (2007) explored the need for teachers to understand the role of culture and language in learning. Berriz (2002) focused on writing strategies to develop literacy when teachers expand cultural awareness in bilingual programs. There is also limited research in this area.

        As the ethnic and racial demographics change in the United States, educational equity must become a focal point for schools. Ladson-Billings (2006) examination of the achievement gap moved beyond standardized test scores to focus on gaps in dropout rates, advanced placement examination data, enrollment in honors advanced placement and gifted classes. Ladson-Billings also added college and professional programs to this list, however, this study will only focus on K-12 education.

        Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, and Koschoreck (2001) argued that increased accountability would not be effective without a focus on eliminating systemic inequities. In the next section of this chapter, I will examine existing research on five challenges to educational equity; including the racial achievement gap, racism, white privilege as institutionalized racism, weak school culture, and low expectations for students of color. As Darling-Hammond (2007) stated, to increase achievement we must "enrich the opportunities for students" (p. 237). Using social justice theories as the lens for addressing these educational equity issues will aid in the development of policy and

practice that will increase access to rigorous instruction for students of color and eliminate the racial achievement gap.

Racial achievement gap. Addressing educational equity is critical to eliminating the racial achievement gap (Viadero, 2006; Lee, 2004; Ogbu, 2003; Berlak, 2001; Jencks & Phillips, 1998). Inequities that exist within our educational system negatively impact the learning experiences of African-American and Hispanic students. As a result, African Americans and Hispanics do not "fare well is U.S. schools" (Boykin & Noguera, 2011, p. vii). Paige (2010) asserted that the Black-White achievement gap is the primary educational barrier for African Americans (p. 10).

Orfield (2009) declared that U.S. public schools still operated in a system of segregation. Similarly, Noguera and Wing (2006) argued that such inequity clearly showed our nation's unfulfilled commitment to equality and justice for all. Singleton and Linton (2006) agreed with Orfield and Noguera and Wing, however, they focused on opening doors to rigorous instruction for students. Singleton and Linton (2006) proposed that equity is not a guarantee that all students will succeed, but an assurance that all students will have the opportunity to do so. As such, we must address all forms of educational inequality and consider the social attitudes and institutions that use race to create disparate opportunities for students (Smedley & Smedley, 2005).

Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, and Koschoreck (2001) recognized the need for a social justice perspective that addressed the achievement gap in U.S. public schools. Haycock (2001) stated that to close the achievement gap, school districts needed to focus on establishing high standards, challenging curricula, and qualified teachers. According to Haycock, the average 12th grade math and reading skills for African-American and

Latino students were equivalent to those of White students in the eighth grade. Students of color consistently fell into the bottom percentile with their grade point averages, college admission test scores, NAEP scores, graduation rates, and college enrollment rates (Jencks & Phillips, 1998).

Ladson-Billings (2006) added to this research by looking at trends in standardized test scores, dropout rates, advanced placement examination data, and enrollment in honors advanced placement and gifted classes. She found that African American students are underrepresented in advanced classes and overrepresented in dropout rates. Pfaller (2010) found that an undisputed, measurable learning gap exists between White children and children of color.

This evidence of a persistent racial achievement gap is significant on a number of levels, particularly in relation to NCLB. Fusarelli (2004) analyzed several states' progress on the accountability measures for NCLB tests and concluded that unless the underlying foundation of the achievement gap were studied, NCLB would not meet its objective of not leaving a child behind. Orfield (2009) confirmed this conclusion.

Williams (2003) explained that the achievement gap was "apparent in a range of educational success indicators (grades, test scores, dropout rates, college entrance/completion rates)" (p. 1). Darling-Hammond (2007), Barton (2004), and Dreben (1987) associated the achievement gap with a lack of high-quality instruction and educational programming for African-American students, along with disparate access to highly qualified teachers. Darling Hammond also found that unequal access to key educational resources (e.g., including qualified teachers and a quality curriculum), rather than the intrinsic deficiency of students of color was the fundamental cause of the

achievement gap. Finally, Darling-Hammond and Barnett (1999) also focused on recruitment, preparation, and retention of highly qualified teachers to work with African American students, since she had found that African American students frequently received the least prepared teachers.

Singleton and Linton (2006) contended that educators should "address the critical factors within their control that influence student achievement" (p. 73). However, other researchers believe that the key to reducing the racial achievement gap lies in placing our focus on issues outside of the school building. Rothstein and Wilder (2005), for example, argued that closing the gap entailed first addressing health care, early childhood experiences, economics and other social equity issues. Similarly, Gould and Gould (2003) also acknowledged the importance of vision screenings and care for students, and Barton (2004) added that the amount of television exposure and student mobility could impact student achievement, as well. These authors all cited their research in high poverty and racially diverse areas that shows that increased state accountability for school districts can raise student achievement for minority students. Shields (2004) argued that anticipating or even allowing lower performance from any group of children is simply inequitable (p.112). Singleton and Linton (2006) agreed with Shields and stated that "we will never eliminate the racial achievement gap unless we have conversations about race" (p.xiv).

Racism. Race is a social construct. (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Smedley A. & Smedley B., 2005; Sternberg, Grigorenko, & Kidd, 2005; Begley, 1996; Witzig, 1996; King, 1995; Rensberger, 1990; Rose, Kamin, & Lewontin, 1984; King, 1981; Rogers, 1980). Society separates humans into social categories of race, based on physical characteristics

(Omi & Winant, 1994). For example, the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) conducted a study on race, which concluded that though genetic differences do exist between individuals and groups, those differences do not follow racial lines (Public Broadcasting System, 2003). The stereotypes and assumptions that have accompanied this social construct over the years have led to assumptions about academic ability and intelligence.

Jensen (1969) used IQ test scores that showed that African Americans were genetically inferior to their white counterparts in the area of general intelligence. Today, we know that this finding was completely inaccurate; however, some educators still believe that students of color and those from low-income households are predisposed genetically to have low intelligence (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). Educators who attribute existing disparities with students of color to genetics or environment radically limit the ability to gain support and implement needed changes in policies (Mazzocco, 2006), since they attribute the deficits in their educational programs to student deficits.

Today, limited research on educational equity, combined with weak, inaccurate public messages of declining racism, contribute to the continued existence of racism in U.S. schools, (Singleton, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 2006; Noguera & Wing, 2006; Tatum, 2006; Williams, 2003 Henze, Katz, Norte, Sather, & Walker, 2002;). Albert Memmi, referenced by Bonilla-Silva (2006), added that the paradox of racism is that though many acknowledge its existence, no one wishes to see himself as racist. Yet racism is present in U.S. society and, by extension, in our schools. Educators must look at the internal and systemic reasons (including those that exist within school structures, processes, and norms) that perpetuate this inequity (Scott, 2001). Ausdale and Feagin (2001) asserted,

"Racism surrounds us, permeates our ideas and conversations, focuses our relationships with one another, [and] shapes our practices" (p. 198).

Despite the adamant denial of some groups that such inequities no longer exist, Ausdale and Feagin (2001) concluded that systemic racism is a continuing reality in the United States. Pine and Hilliard (1990) came to the same conclusion, and explained, "Racism is the unjustified negative treatment and subordination of members of a racial or ethnic group and does not require intention" (p. 595).

As researchers establish that racism is still a prominent factor in education, then educators leading for educational equity must discuss race and Singleton (2008) emphatically stated, "Race is not the only factor… but, it is the missing factor." Mazzocco (2006) argued that dialogue on race and racial disparities in education is essential in reaching the conclusion that a color-conscious approach supports racially equitable policies. This approach also focuses the attention of people on positive attributes of groups to which they are not a member, rather than on their inadequacies. "Solving the problem of racism is America's unfinished agenda, and it must be regarded by educators as a moral imperative" (Pine & Hilliard, 1990, p. 596).

To minimize the racial achievement gap, racism should be addressed openly and continuously (Gardner, 2007). In the time of the Jim Crow laws, racism was overt and easily identifiable. However, today, unless an action against another group or its members is public and singularly aggressive, the act is not considered to be racially motivated. Pollock (2008) defined everyday antiracism as "actions [taken] every day, to help counteract racial inequality and racism in schools and society" (p. xvii). Pollock contended that the need for everyday antiracism in education highlights the importance of

strategic, self-conscious practices and the rejection of false genetic and deficit theories (p. 2).

Racism is not something that we should address only when we see blatant acts of hate. "If we tell ourselves that the only problem is hate, we avoid facing the reality that it is mostly nice, non-hating people who perpetuate racial inequality" (Cose, 1998, p. 20). Today, we are dealing with a form of racism that is more silent and accepted, particularly in today's schools. The racism may not be "consciously intended or seen by educators, as it is systemically embedded in the assumptions, mindsets, policies, procedures and structures of schooling" (Chisnall, 2010, p. 1).

Today, for varying reasons, few educators consciously and explicitly confront institutionalized racism, which is masked by teachers as lower expectations; increased discipline; inequitable allocation of resources; and an underdeveloped will, skill, and knowledge base to identify ways of effectively teaching students of color (Singleton & Noli, 2001). Many educators may be blinded by their unconscious acceptance of the status quo/cultural norms established by the dominant white culture. Since White privilege is embedded in society as cultural norms, many educators cannot see the racist policies and practices.

White privilege as institutionalized racism. The term *institutional racism* describes societal patterns that impose oppressive or negative conditions against identifiable groups on the basis of race or ethnicity (Carmichael, 1960). Several researchers have identified a pervasive myth that those who consider themselves liberals or "not racist" do not contribute to institutionalized racism. This myth ignores the presence of White privilege, the racial and cultural dominance and consciousness from

24

which most White people unknowingly benefit on a daily basis (Singleton & Linton, 2006; Rothenberg, 2005; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001).

Whiteness has become the dominant cultural norm, interwoven with power and privilege (Bersh, 2009). Without fully examining the concept of Whiteness, school leaders will not be able to delve fully into the basis of racism within a system and its processes or structures, all of which were developed by White people. Trent, Kea, and Oh (2008) stated that "what goes unacknowledged ultimately becomes invisible" (p. 346). To establish learning environments that provide equitable educational experiences, teachers continually and critically must examine their own cultural identities (Bersh, 2009). Racial inequality results when educators put "people of color at a disadvantage, while simultaneously giving white people an unwarranted advantage" (Trepagnier, 2006, p. 65). Reflective leaders also understand that not considering, discussing, and/or addressing issues of race, poverty, and disability only further perpetuates the safeguarding of power and the status quo (Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Larson & Ovando, 2001).

Pollock (2006) contended that educational leaders must address institutionalized racism through a critical analysis of conditions that have perpetuated historical inequities in schools. To address this institutionalized racism, educators must work to "change institutional structures and culture" (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005, p. 202). This effort is singularly important, because institutionalized racism operates at a systemic and structural level (Berlak, 2001). To achieve social justice, we must eliminate institutionalized racism and move away from the "separate but equal" doctrine (Smedley & Smedley, 2005; Berlak, 2001).

25

Wise (2002) noted that, despite having lived as an activist for many years, he continued to experience the benefits of being White and participating in the White system of dominance. These benefits constitute a form of racial privilege. Being White in the United States involves experiencing a "privileged status and strong identity" (Ausdale & Feagin, 2001, p. 34).

It is important to engage in activities that build cultural awareness, and for people who are White to understand the hidden White culture. To understand how the educational system excludes African-American and Hispanic students, White educators need to focus on deconstructing Whiteness, to understand the White identity under which American schools are structured (Bersh, 2009; Rothenberg, 2005; Howard, 1999; McIntosh, 1989).

Pfaller (2010) defined White privilege as the perceived advantages enjoyed by White people beyond that which is commonly experienced by non-White people in those same social, political, and economic spaces (nation, community, workplace, income, etc.). Educational leaders must find a way to extend these extra supports to students of color and other minorities (McIntosh, 1989). School systems must analyze their own structures and processes to ensure equal access to educational resources for all people.

Howard (2006) asserted that "there will be no meaningful movement toward social justice and real educational reform until there has been a significant transformation in the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of White Americans" (p.6). The next section will outline a need for examining school culture. While schools in the United States are operating under a White dominant culture educators must begin a transformation with an

examination of the role that school culture plays in perpetuating White privilege and the dominance of White cultural norms.

Examining school culture. Williams (2003) explained that examining a school's culture is one of the first major steps toward closing the racial achievement gap. Just as social justice is the foundation for educational equity, a school's culture is its' foundation. Further, the school culture perpetuates a set of beliefs and core values that the school holds about teaching and learning. Building a strong school culture is also a social justice leadership practice (Theoharis, 2007). Mapleton School District (district website) defined school culture as the written and unwritten norms that guide a school in its work to support student achievement. Similarly, Deal and Peterson (1997) defined school culture as the "underground stream and norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that has built up over time as people work together, solve problems, and confront challenges" (p. 28). Hubbard took a slightly different approach, and defined school culture as the "arrangements that make up students everyday life experiences" (p. 48). The implications for the study were that the school culture affects educational equity in students' everyday experiences within the school.

School culture is the foundation for any change or school improvement efforts, because it provides a focus and clear purpose for the school. Culture guides a school's students and staff on their path to achieve their mission (Patterson, Purkey, & Parker, as cited in Boyd, 1992, p. 3). Most efforts to change or improve a school will not succeed without a clear school culture tied to the vision for change. In a study by Skrla et al. (2009) study, Judith Richardson stated that, "no long-term, significant change can take place without creating a culture to sustain that change" (p. x).

The overall culture of a school district is linked to operation of individual schools within the district. "The effectiveness of districts, in terms of student learning and development, is significantly influenced by the quality and characteristics of district culture" (Owens, as cited in Childress, Elmore, Grossman, & Akinola., 2004, p. 2). School culture is linked with student achievement and motivation. To influence effective change in student behaviors and outcomes, educational leaders must foster a positive school culture (Smith & Lambert, 2008). In a survey of 4th, 6th, 8th, and 10th grade students from 820 public schools in Illinois, Maehr (1990) found that students were more motivated to learn in schools with a strong culture (Stolp, 1995, p. 2). School culture can have a profound effect on student achievement. Dr. Brenda Cunningham, a principal in Florida, examined the relationship between school culture and reading ability in 61 schools. She found a significant relationship between the school culture survey scores and the reading scores on the state test, "The healthier the school culture, the higher the reading scores. The more toxic the school culture, the lower the reading scores" (Wagner, 2004/2005, p. 14). A healthy school culture is one that perpetuates equal access to educational resources and high expectations for students of color. The section below will examine the negative impacts of low expectations within the school setting.

Low expectations for students of color. Numerous studies have focused on teacher expectations and how these expectations can influence quality learning opportunities for students (Miller, 2006; Smith, 2006; Moses-Snipes & Moses-Snipes, 2005; Landsman, 2004; Hrabowski, 2003; Rolon, 2003; Gay, 2000). Conchas (2006) cited low expectations as a major contributor to low academic performance (p. 62). The teachers expectations are the "most important factor in the growth and development of

children' (Kunjufu, 2005, p. 25). Lawrence (2005) reviewed studies conducted by Skrla and Scheurich (2001), which showed that low teacher expectations, and behaviors based on those low expectations, were a contributing factor to the racial achievement gap.

Developing a school-wide expectation that all students can learn requires strong leadership; focused beliefs; and deliberate, systematic action over time. Principals leading for equity must model that expectation. Hertzog (2005) examined equity and access for African-American students in U.S. gifted programs. His research showed that a change in teacher attitudes and teaching strategies was mirrored by their African American students as a positive attitude shift from teachers and then by students. Singleton (2008) highlighted lowered expectations as one of the main causes of systemic racial educational disparities; along with unequal opportunity, denied access, and inequitable resource allocation.

Gay (2000) emphasized the need for educators to act immediately with culturally competent and structured action. Such action is key to achieving a total commitment to educational equity, justice, and excellence for students of color. In addition, Gay argued that an educator's good intentions toward racially different students should be linked with action, supported by awareness and understanding of cultural differences, bolstered by pedagogical knowledge and skills that enable them to dismantle academically unjust and discriminatory behaviors. Paige (2010), a former U.S. Secretary of Education, stated that the issue is not whether African American children and youth are able to achieve at the highest levels, but how adults can make that happen.

Good and Brophy (1994) found that though many teachers professed to believe that all students could learn, they did not expect some of them to learn. Conchas (2006)

29

found studies that showed schools "where racial patterns of achievement [had] been fixed for long periods of time, students and the adults who work with them [were] more likely to perceive racial identity as determining academic performance" (p. 45). As a result, they held lower expectations for those students and did not insist that students become engaged in the learning process.

Kose (2007) wrote about a study participant, a middle school principal, who said, "I hate the phrase, 'All kids can learn.' To me, that's an insult to educators and to kids, because of course all kids can learn. The question is, 'What are they learning?'" (p. 34). Ideally, this statement should ask *if* students of color are learning, and if not, we should determine what the principal is doing to address teaching and learning. A principal who is actively seeking an answer to this statement would exemplify a social justice leader who takes action to address inequities within his school environment.

Social Justice

This section discusses social justice as a mechanism to address inequities in society. It will provide an overview of the history of social justice and its connection to education in the United States.

The history of social justice. The concept of social justice dates back to the days of Plato, the Greek philosopher, who introduced the concept in his writings. He defined an ideal society as one that built upon the concepts of social justice and based upon the principles of wisdom, courage, moderation, and justice (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2009). Many underplayed the importance of this contribution by noting that Plato focused primarily on achieving social justices for the poor populations in Greek society. Centuries later, the concept emerged in early Christian and Judaic writings,

which promoted tolerance, equality, and fairness, regardless of an individual's status in society. Over time, social justice became a prominent part of many social, political, and economic ideologies and helped to define an *equal and fair society* as one that provides equal access to services for all (Rawls, 1971).

Social justice began to take a prominent role in American society in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, primarily as part of the civil rights movement (see Figure 2.1). Social justice philosophy came to its first climax during and following the presidency of Abraham Lincoln and the U.S. Civil War, with the enactment of the 13th amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which abolished slavery.

Figure 2.1. *Examples of Social Justice in Action Within the Civil Rights Movement*
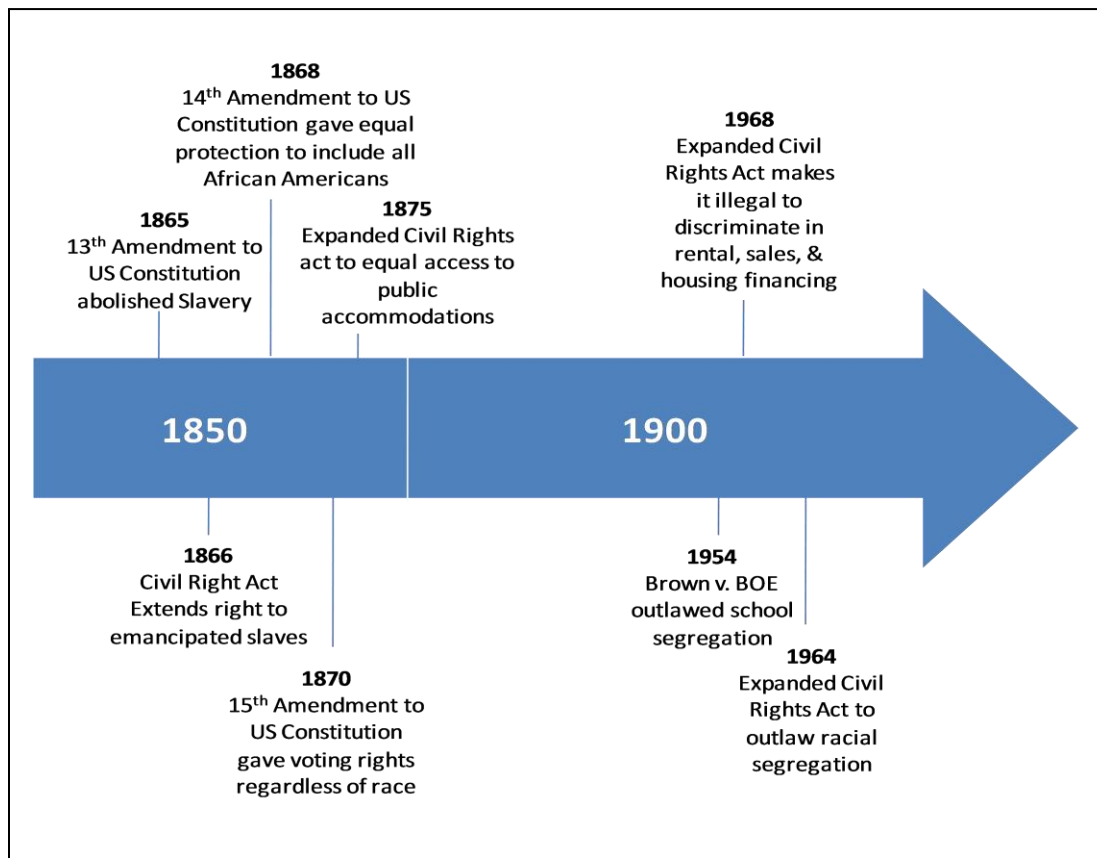
Since its inception, Rawl's definition has served as a framework for formal and informal social, political, and economic organizations. Political parties use it as a platform for promoting their agendas, while social institutions utilize it in formulating organizational and programmatic goals. Social justice is important in several arenas, yet this study will focus primarily on its ties to the field of education.

Social justice in education. Current research indicates that numerous inequities still exist in the U.S. educational system. In 2005, only 17% of African-American youth and 11% of Hispanics had earned a college degree, compared to 35% of White youth (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). According to 2001 – 2005 prison statistics, 791,600 African-American men were incarcerated, while only 603,000 were enrolled in a higher education program. According to the Justice Policy Institute (2005), three times more African-American men entered the prison system than those who enrolled in colleges and universities. Their research links these high incarceration rates to the disparate educational opportunities afforded to African-American students within the elementary and secondary school systems. These statistics show the importance of using social justice principles to increase educational equity and close the racial achievement gap. One approach to ensuring greater parity is preparing school administrators to employ effective leadership practices that eliminate educational inequities in their buildings. In the section that follows, I describe practices utilized by educational leaders who have successfully addressed the disparities that existed in their schools.

Effective Leadership

Effective leadership is the required variable in achieving educational equity (Orfield, 2009). A large body of research indicates that a positive relationship exists

between school leadership and student achievement (Rodriguez, 2008; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Stephens, 2004; Larbi, 2003). Marzano (2003) noted that leadership impacted the implementation of the factors that make schools that work: school, teacher and student level. Effective leaders foster a nurturing environment that prioritizes teaching and learning. This section provides an overview of effective leadership, transformative leadership, instructional leadership.

Northouse (2007) defined leadership is an individual's efforts to influence a group to achieve a common goal. Sergiovanni (2001) asserted that leadership grew from a person's commitment to their individual beliefs, values, and dreams. The principalship in today's educational system is a complex role that requires a person to have a strong vision for their school. Sergiovani (2001) found that when vision is present "teachers, and students respond with increased motivation and commitment and their performance is beyond expectations" (p. 149). The principal's vision needs to be linked with the improvement plan for the school. Fullan (2002) explained that school improvement efforts attempted without effected leadership were more likely to meet failure than success.

Recent research has focused on educators as transformative leaders. Saxe (2011) defined transformational leadership as the practice of developing a shared vision for the school, building consensus around key priorities, holding high expectations, providing support, and building collaborative cultures and shared leadership. According to Hoy and Miskel (2001), transformational leadership is defined by the teachers' perceptions of an ideal leader. Elmore (2000) supported distributed models of leadership, as opposed to the tradition model of the principal as an individual serving all leadership functions for the

school. Larbi (2003) also found that transformational school leaders were more effective in improving instruction and increasing student achievement. Similarly, Saxe (2011) concluded that transformational leaders persuade, inspire, and motivate others to achieve results.

A variety of researchers has argued that principals must prioritize instructional leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Willison, 2008; Waters & Marzano, 2005; Marzano & McNulty, 2003). Principals must be able to balance many demands, while maintaining their focus on the instructional program. Willison (2008), for example, defined the school principal as an instructional leader focused student achievement and the quality of classroom instruction. Elmore (2000) emphasized the importance of understanding effective practices in curriculum. This understanding enables school leaders to work with teachers on daily instructional issues. Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) found that monitoring the instructional program and providing feedback to teachers helps to increase student achievement in the school. Effective instructional leadership highlights the necessity for change and is required to implement the change processes (Blackmore, 2002; Bogotch, 2002; Rapp, 2002; Fullan, 1993). When principals model a supportive collaborative approach that is linked with a strong sense of purpose, they can impact academic outcomes in a positive way (Brown, Benkovita, Muttillo, & Urban, 2011).

In addition to instructional leadership, Marzano et al. (2005) concurred that a principal's behavior and leadership attributes can have a positive influence on student outcomes.   These influential actions include involving teachers in the design and implementation of important policies and monitoring the effectiveness of school practices

and their impact on student learning (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). Marzano et al. (2005) identified 21 leadership responsibilities and their correlations with student achievement. These responsibilities included "communication with and among teachers and students, building culture by way of fostering shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation, involvement and knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and monitoring / evaluating the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student learning" (Marzano et al., 2005, p. 141).

Given the strong connection between quality principals and high-performing schools, Scheurich and Skrla (2003) claimed that "good leadership, the bodies and spirits of our leadership, is crucial to the justice of our cause for equity and excellence in schooling" (p. 99). School leadership has a positive relationship with student achievement, which impacts educational equity.

Leadership for Social Justice and Educational Equity

Social justice as equity in education. Social justice is one of the fundamental concepts of educational equity work in schools. Many researchers define the concept of social justice within education in different ways. Marshall and Oliva (2006) grappled with the challenge of defining social justice within the educational system in a way that would weave together the concepts of equity, cultural diversity, and the achievement gap. They considered social justice as the personal responsibility of all educators. Ladson-Billings (2006) linked social justice to moral debt as a, "disparity between what we know is right and what we actually do" (p. 8). Bogotch (2000) defined social justice as a social construct, where "there are no fixed or predictable meanings of social justice prior to

actually engaging in educational leadership practices" (p. 153). He further argued that one could not separate social justice from educational leadership practices.

Gewirtz (2006) discussed the need to study social justice in a contextualized setting and focused on how educators enact justice in practice, rather than at an abstract level. Theoharis (2007) characterized social justice as addressing and eliminating situations of marginalization in schools, with the principals' focus on "historically and currently marginalizing conditions central to their advocacy leadership, practice, and vision" (p. 224). Theoharis' definition included race, class, gender, disability and sexual orientation, only one of which (race) was the focus of this study. As Sammoff (1996) stated, "Equity, however, has to do with fairness and justice. And there is the problem…Where there has been a history of discrimination, justice may require providing special encouragement and support for those who are disadvantaged in the past… To achieve equity—justice-- may require structured inequalities, at least temporarily. Achieving equal access, itself a very difficult challenge, is the first step toward achieving equity" (Sammoff, 1996, p. 266-267). Despite the efforts of social justice theorists, the paragraphs above demonstrate the myriad of definitions.

The next section provides an overview of the literature on efforts to move from definitions and random efforts to a concentrated leadership plan for social justice.

Leadership for Social Justice

Social justice school leaders both "acknowledge the need for systemic equity, even in challenging contexts, and take actual steps to ensure excellence and equity for all students" (Chisnall, 2010, p. 59). Critics argue that social justice within the educational system can only be achieved if leaders, especially principals and the professionals whom

36

they lead, are able to understand, implement, and continuously refine education equity into their curriculums, professional development opportunities, and daily teaching activities (McNaulty, 2011; Chisnall, 2010; Johnson, 2009; McKenzie, Christman, & Hernandez, 2008; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Kose, 2007; Dantley, 2006; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNaulty, 2003; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001). The leader has a moral obligation to pursue social justice for all students (Saxe, 2011). Larson and Murtadha (2002) build upon the moral imperative idea and add that principals must have the belief "that injustice in our schools and communities is neither natural nor inevitable" (p. 135). Principals and teachers must integrate the concept of educational equity into their daily practice.

Integrating social justice into the educational setting requires that educators make a conscious effort to move away from the effects of "dysconscious[ness]: an uncritical habit of mind; including perceptions, attitudes, assumptions and beliefs; that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given" (King, 1997, p. 135). This belief limits educators' ability to recognize and acknowledge that all students of color can achieve (King, 1997). Principals need to address beliefs, not strategies, to impact lasting change in teachers (Guerra & Nelson, 2009). Effective school administrators strive to enact social justice leadership and do not walk away from racial issues, but lead through them to advance a social justice agenda (Larson & Murtadha, 2002). Building upon that idea, Ford (2010) explained, "enacting leadership for "social justice" refers to the practice of those principals who consciously and consistently work with their schools to alter the status quo of under-serving predictable, often racialized, groups of students to create schools that *benefit* all students" (p. 7).

Principals must lead by consciously addressing issues of social justice.

Otherwise, teachers will continue to have low expectations of their students of color and

will provide them with limited access to honors classes, disproportionately place them in

special education, and restrict their exposure to a rigorous curriculum. Some scholars

argue that principals who lead schools must focus on educational equity and believe that

combining equity and excellence is an urgency rather than a mandate (McNaulty, 2011;

McKenzie, Christman, & Hernandez, 2008; Kose, 2007; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004;

Skrla & Scheurich, 2001).

Leadership for Educational Equity

Singleton and Linton (2006) defined equity as "raising the achievement of all

students, while narrowing the gap between the highest and lowest performing students;

eliminating the racial predictability, and disproportionality of which student groups

occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories" (p. 46). Scheurich and Skrla

(2003) explained that educational equity is "linked with excellence where educational

equity means all students achieve high levels of academic success and there are no

persistent patterns of differences in academic success by race ethnicity or any other

factors" (p. 2).

Both Chisnall (2010) and Skrla, Scheurich, Johnson, and Koschoreck (2001)

found that principals play a key role in increasing equity by supporting changes in

schools that address existing disparities. Such leadership requires that school

administrators address disparities to successfully eliminate racial disparity within their

schools, research indicates that principals first must understand what it means to lead for

38

educational equity. Once they have established this understanding, they then must identify key strategies for achieving parity among their students.

Understanding leadership for educational equity. Karns and Parker (2007) defined educational equity as the provision of equal access to learning experiences and fair play during in the school setting (p. 12). Leaders cannot and should not accept inequitable achievement as a given (Scheurich, Skrla, & Johnson, 2000); especially for students who face multiple forms of oppression and marginalization in the existing educational system (Gerwirtz, 2006).

Lopez, Magdaleno, and Reis (2006) defined leadership for equity as bold, courageous actions that eliminate inequities and reduce the achievement gap. Scheurich and Skrla (2003) identified essential characteristics of leadership for equity and excellence: "(a) a strong ethical or moral core focused on equity and excellence; (b) a belief that improvement in equity and excellence is possible; and (c) never quitting in the insistence on working towards equity and excellence" (p. 143). In addition, Scheurich and Skrla (2003) also argued that data needs to be analyzed by specific student groups, so that an overall data picture does not hide low subgroup performance of any one group. In 2004, Skrla et al. again asserted that the use of data is essential to address inequities shown when data is disaggregated.

Key strategies. Research has identified a number of strategies that effective leaders have employed in their efforts to establish educational equity in their schools. Such strategies include collaborating with staff and community partners, making good use of data, finding the courage to lead, and establishing clear goals.

Collaborating with staff and community partners. According to Scheurich and Skrla (2003) principals must find and work with allies in their buildings and districts, and within local community organizations. While engaging staff in discussions, leaders must insist that staff activity center around the goal of ensuring equity and excellence for all students. Leaders must facilitate, not dictate, their vision of equity and excellence for all students, with every group and should spread their message at every opportunity.

Youngs and King (2002) studied the principal's staff development beliefs and actions at high poverty, low-achieving elementary schools. They found that principals believe that trust among staff is a key factor to implementing a change process. Principals must be aware of staff shared norms and values before beginning a new focus and must create continuing opportunities for teachers to collaborate in building a shared commitment.

Using data. Making good use of data at a school and student level also is key to establishing educational equity. According to Scott (2001), student achievement for all recognized groups of learners increased when data were disaggregated and analyzed. Dahir and Stone (2009) found that when school leaders make strategic decisions about instruction and intervention based on data, with the specific purpose of "removing barriers to learning," then schools move beyond good intentions and start to make systematic change. Scheurich and Skrla (2003) explored principals who promoted the use of data to uncover and erase systemic inequities. Rather than focus on external causes of the achievement gap, Scheurich and Skrla suggested that school leaders focus on internal or *systemic* inequities "because they are built into the processes and procedures of the system that is the school" (p. 80).

Finding the courage to lead. Noguera (2002) noted that because educational leaders have not prioritized equity in public education, principals with the knowledge, skills, and courage to lead for greater equity in academic outcomes and treatment of students are rare. Despite this fact, leading for social justice and education is a difficult, yet necessary, approach to eliminating tracking, providing access to honors and advanced placement courses, addressing grade disparities, and decreasing suspension rates among African-American and Hispanic student populations. Noguera also explained that leaders who put their belief that all students should have the opportunity to learn into practice need the skills to articulate a clear vision that focuses on academic excellence and equity. Henze, et al. (2002) found courage to be a key characteristic of leaders who effectively promoted school practices that addressed diversity in ways that promoted equity. The principals regularly used self-reflection to examine how their experiences, their social and ethnic background influenced their perceptions attitudes and beliefs and how all of these reflected in their work. Gerwirtz and Cribb (2002) found that when leaders ignored conflicts, they likely thwarted an opportunity to enforce social justice.

Establishing clear goals. Williams' (2003) stressed that leaders must develop clear goals with a collective focus. In her study, teachers agreed a supportive, goal-oriented principal was essential for staff engagement. Manning and Kovich (2003) also found that principals must organize their schools around clear goals established by effective leaders focused on eliminating the achievement gap and promoting equity and excellence for all students.

As principals establish these goals, Shields (2004) suggested that principals use guiding criteria for actions and decisions to ask, "Who is being included or excluded,

whose reality is represented and whose marginalized?" (p. 123). In collaboration with staff, principals need to identify an area of focus and disaggregate data and determine the root cause to address the issue. Thus, schools can remove patterns of inequity by implementing collaborative solutions and continuously studying the results (Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003).

Research suggests that there is need for more research centered on studying the link between school leadership and student achievement at the school. Herrity and Glassman (1999) focused their research on educational administrators working with diverse populations and their ability to develop trust with minority students, a critical ingredient to student success. They found that principals have limited knowledge or skills in trust building strategies, and they recommended that additional research was needed to examine how principals can become better prepared to shape school practices that foster success for minority students.

Implications for Further Research

Marshall and Oliva (2006) maintained that although policymakers and scholars can discuss what should be done, educational leaders are the people "who deliver some form of social justice" (p. 1). Marshall and Oliva compiled works from other authors that examined the process of becoming a social justice leader and breaking out of comfortable leadership traditions that do not address equity. To accommodate needed change, researchers must work together with practitioners and build relationships between schools and universities to look at educational roles and organizational structures (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005). The interrelationship between theory and action is critical to the process of ensuring that social justice remains at the forefront of our efforts to

define and implement strategies that make a positive change in the educational experiences of students of color (Walker, 2003).

Theoharis (2007) examined the ways that principals defined and enacted social justice in their schools, addressed resistance to their movement, and developed sustainable practices that allow them to meet goals. According to Theoharis, the principals achieved the following results when they enacted social justice with a focus on equity: (a) student achievement was improved, (b) school structures enhancing student achievement were supported, (c) staff capacity was enhanced, and (d) school culture and community engagement was enhanced.

McKenzie and Scheurich (2004) identified equity traps, including deficit views and racial erasure, and enumerated strategies that they had found to avoid these traps. The study revealed that inequity resulted from administrator and teacher attitudes, beliefs, assumptions and behaviors. McKenzie and Scheurich concluded that if educators wished to conquer these limitations, they would have to overcome the uncritical habits of mind that followed from their "dysconscious behavior, or their narrow perceptions, attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs (King, 1997). Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, and Nolly (2004) proposed the simple formula of teacher quality equity plus programmatic equity equals achievement equity. Scheurich and Skrla (2001) recommend conducting *equity audits* "to identify patterns of inequity for the purpose of addressing those patterns and creating new patterns of equity" (p. 80). Based on these findings, the authors called for approaches to addressing equity in principal preparation programs and suggested that districts focus on equity issues in their professional development programs.

Similarly, Lopez, Magdaleno and Reis (2006) advocated for leadership development programs that focus on equity and socially responsible leadership, thus helping principals prepare to address inequities that block the success of students from historically underserved populations. This call for the development of effective approaches for teacher professional development was a common theme throughout the literature.

For example, Howard's (2006) phases showed the need for long-term professional development that focused on equity and excellence in schools, and considered the challenges inherent in how teachers who discounted the importance of diversity addressed changing demographics using unsuccessful, traditional methods. Brown (2006) noted the need for studies that explored how students' diverse experiences and learning opportunities lead to their greater understanding of different cultures, an awareness of social inequities, and different ways of thinking (p. 732).

Kose (2007) examined a middle school principal's commitment to creating systemic, sustained professional development opportunities focused on social justice. The case study described how the principal created a framework for staff around the equity vision that defined program coherence and established a link between the vision and differentiated professional development. The findings showed that the principal's involvement in all levels of the plan, and his focus on being a teacher of teachers, created a strong foundation for the successful implementation of the vision at his school. This type of study must be replicated with a larger sampling to identify additional and diverse role models of leaders for social justice. McKenzie, Christman, Hernandez, et al. (2008) agreed that a strong foundational program must be built to prepare principal leaders. This

initiative would require more time for induction programs and a specific focus on social justice.

Despite intense political focus, many researchers now agree that there is a need for studies that move beyond the theory of social justice to practice (Gaetane, 2007). Theoharis (2007) suggested that a need exists for more research on leadership traits that support a focus on equity and an increased equity and social justice perspective in principal preparation programs. Principals may face considerable opposition in their social justice efforts, and they must be prepared to address resistant teacher behavior stemming from stereotypes and a lack of knowledge, experience, and belief that all students can achieve high levels of academic achievement. These factors impact principal preparation programs where the traditional leadership preparation approach has marginalized social justice issues and concerns, since they are not discussed (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Marshall, 2004).

In an effort to provide vital information for preparing principals, Henze et al. (2002) developed a series of self-reflection questions to guide principals before they worked with staff to develop a clear vision for organizational change that supported all students in their learning. This type of conscious decision-making about leading for educational equity is not accidental. If the statistical data on race and the achievement gap is to change, principals of urban schools require support systems that will help them establish practices that ensure social justice for all students (Houston, 2009).

The literature presented above points to a number of voids in existing research. Future inquiries should work to provide (a) a greater understanding of how principals lead for equity; (b) studies drawn from more than one school; (c) studies that examine

how social justice leaders translate their beliefs into action; and (d) more empirical data about how principals can promote educational equity in their schools.

Summary of Review of Literature

The United States education system has many needs; including increased funding, and retaining both qualified teachers and experienced administrators. However, leadership for equity is the need that incorporates all of those stated above. Orfield (2009) argued that leaders must recognize that we have not fulfilled the dream of the *Brown* decision. To achieve the true goals of this ruling, we must do more than theorize; we must study leaders and schools that are leading for social justice and prioritizing educational equity. Through these observations, we can garner recommendations for practice enhancements that can effect positive change in the educational experiences of students of color (Dantley, 2006).

Scheurich, Skrla, and Johnson (2000) identified a need for "an equity mandate-for equal academic success for children of color…. instead of saying we are dedicated to success with all students, we would actually decide to do it" (p. 23). Singleton's (2008) speech concluded that "It is not that it can't be done - it is that I will not do it, or, I am not prepared to lead? Rather the question of: How long does it take us to get ready? We are comfortable with no progress or this small, incremental change. Why?" This is important due to the researchers stating that there are schools that are promoting educational equity, and educators need to ask why their own school may not be moving ahead. Thirty-three years ago, Edmonds (1979) stated that we must ask ourselves

> [Why] we can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children who schooling is of interest to us; we already know more than we need to do that yet whether or not we do it must finally depend about how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far. (p. 20)

46

Reaching true racial equity will require "everyday justice" by educators who ask themselves:

1. "Am I offering equal access to the opportunities and benefits of education, rather than denying it?

2. Am I moving the student closer to opportunity rather than farther away from it?" (Pollock, 2006, p. 247)

The literature identifies the equity-driven principal as the essential piece to having schools that model educational equity. However, sparse research exists that outlines a clear model that principals could utilize when planning for educational equity in their schools. Today's schools have much to gain from a focus on educational equity, not only for the students who would ultimately benefit from the identified practices, but also for principals and educators, who will gain cultural competency and ultimately become better educators.

The major research question guiding this study was "How do principals promote educational equity in schools?" This study focused on the district principals who lead for educational equity in schools and who move beyond stereotypes that attempt to justify low achievement. The principals in the current study aimed to move beyond using excuses about lack of preparation and blaming the culture or parents for students' lack of achievement and instead focused on what each student needs to achieve high academic levels. They understood the urgency for change and developed successful strategies that ensured educational equity for all students.

The next section will describe how the conceptual framework was developed based on current research at the time of the study. This framework guided the study.

Conceptual Framework

Maxwell (2005) defined the conceptual framework as "the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs your research" (p. 33). I used the work of Brown et al. (2011) and McNaulty (2011) to develop the conceptual framework for this study.

Brown et al. (2011) researched school principals that were promoting and supporting systemic equity for all students and academic excellence. Brown et al.'s work was based on Scott's (2001) systemic equity framework and Hoy's (2008) research on academic optimism.

Brown et al. (2011) developed a guide for focusing on academic optimism (academic excellence) that effectively worked to close the achievement gap. The authors described practices that principals used to confront and change practices of racism in their schools. These practices included the following:

- Focus on instruction: Teamwork approach,

- Data driven decision-making: Balance approach,

- All actions focus on student achievement: Sense of purpose, and

- Quest for excellence: Insistence that all students are served well/encouraged to perform at their highest level.

It was important to utilize this study in building the framework due to the connections with academic optimism and actual principal practices that were researched.

McNaulty (2011) researched social justice leadership indicators in K-12 education. McNaulty's research was based upon principals demonstrating strong leadership qualities, however, social justice leaders add upon those qualities to address

injustices they see in education. McNaulty used three types of justice: distributive, recognitional, and associational to overview his findings. McNaulty based the definitions of these terms on Gerwitz's (2006) work. McNaulty (2011) defined these terms in his research as follows:

- distributive justice: absence of marginalization;

- recognitional justice: absence of non-recognition; and

- associational justice: democracy in the workplace (pp. 27-28).

This framework corresponded well with my study because I also researched principals across elementary through secondary settings. Because I believe an interaction exists between academic optimism (Brown) and academic achievement (McNaulty), I based my conceptual framework on both studies. Looking at McNaulty's findings, I selected practices of common themes for leaders that crossed all three types of justice: distributive, recognitional, and associational for the concept of academic achievement (p. 221).

- Student performance data

- Substantive decision making processes based on instructional data (student data)

- Trust/Love

- Inclusive practices to unify a high expectation curriculum

- Hiring quality people

This conceptual framework guided the development of the interview questions and the initial coding nodes. Yin (1994) argued that "theory development prior to the collection of any case study data is an essential step in doing case studies" (p. 28).

The following model symbolizes the conceptual framework for the study based on McNaulty's (2011) research about social justice leadership and Brown et al.'s (2011) work on strategies used to close achievement gaps. Figure 2.2 provides an overview of the conceptual framework used in this study.

Figure 2.2: *Conceptual Framework*

Conceptual Framework*

Social justice leaders employ a critical consciousness through educational equity to reduce and address injustices in education.

Strategies principals utilize to mitigate injustice:

Hiring quality people

Inclusive practices that focus on instruction

Substantive decision making processes based on instructional data (student data)

All actions focused on academic optimism (*academic excellence*).

Sense of purpose/ vision that all students are served well.

All actions focus on student achievement

Trust/ Love

Principal Leadership is the foundation for the framework. The principal sets the direction, manages the instructional program and develops the organization.

*Based on Brown, Benkovitz, Muttilo, & Urban (2011) and McNaulty (2011)

Chapter 3: Design & Methodology

This chapter outlines the rationale for the design of the study. The sections below explain the data collection steps, data analysis procedures and validation processes used in the study.

Approach

The study only focused on educational equity. The study did not focus on any other types of equity within schools. The research question is based on the premise that just as social justice is the foundation for educational equity, the principal is the primary person responsible for and the foundation for everything that occurs in a school. If the foundation is not strong, systemic change and lasting results will not be achieved.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

The study sought to answer the research question: How do principals promote educational equity in schools?   The research question required participating principals to share their experiences, beliefs, and strategies for establishing educational equity in their schools, and their responses serve as evidence of the phenomena of study (Maxwell, 1996). The use of qualitative methods were appropriate for this study because the above research question about educational equity and the related experiences and beliefs of the study respondents help us better understand and examine how these issues can be explained and addressed (Maxwell, 1996). Creswell (1998) provided the following definition of qualitative research:

> an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social of human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p.15)

Employing a qualitative approach helped me understand the "complexity of social interactions" occurring daily between the identified principals and the myriad of people who worked in their schools (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 2). Marshall and Rossman (1999) stated that qualitative researchers are interested in phenomena "grounded in the lived experiences of people" (p. 2). Schram (2003) noted that in a qualitative inquiry, the questions aid in the following:

> (a) documenting real cases bounded in time and circumstance, (b) understanding how the principals in this setting make sense of and give meaning to their experiences, (c) understanding the contextual influences of the principals' actions and behaviors, (d) identifying any unanticipated or assumed influences or phenomenon, (e) understanding processes by studying events and actions that have taken place, and (f) understanding the relationship between the particular case and its wider social environment's." (p. 61)

Qualitative research seeks "richer detail as the researcher interacts with subjects in an attempt to understand and interpret how they construct the world in which they live and work" (Chisnall, 2010, p. 63). Qualitative research was the best approach since the study sought to describe "naturally occurring events that are in close proximity to a specific situation, over a sustained period, that locate the meanings that people place on the social world around them" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10).

The present study used the characteristics of qualitative research that were compiled by Marshall and Rossman (1998). The study focused on phenomena that take place in the natural world; and "(a) used multiple methods that are active and humanistic, (b) was emergent rather than tightly prefigured, and (c) was fundamentally interpretive" (Marshall & Rossman, 1998, p. 9). Qualitative research also allowed me to focus on the participants' voice, which is key to answering the study's research question.

Design

      I conducted this inquiry by developing case studies based on the experiences of three different principals in one school district. Case study was the appropriate research design because my goal was to conduct an in-depth exploration of the experiences of one or more individual(s) as they lead for educational equity in their schools (Creswell, 2003, p. 15). Marshall and Rossman (1999) noted qualitative research as a means to explore various processes. This was helpful as each principal described structures and processes within their school. Using structured interviews for each case allowed me to "preserve chronological flow, see precisely which events led to which consequences, and derive fruitful explanations" (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 1).

      A qualitative case study "can be a means to present a well-rounded case description, which does not sanitize the modes, experiences, intentions, or feelings of the participants, including the researcher" (Via, 2008). Yin (1994) explained that: "In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (p. 1). I focused on three cases: one elementary school principal, one middle school principal, and one high school principal and their experiences with educational equity.

Overview of Research Methods

      I divided this study into four distinct phases: (1) purposeful sample selection; (2) data collection during structured interviews; (3) an analysis of each individual case; and (4) a cross case analysis. Each phase is described in the next sections.

Phase One: Purposeful sample selection. I used purposeful sampling, so that the participants selected could provide the detailed information needed for rich case studies (McMillian, 2004; Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003). I kept the sample size to three principals so that these case studies could yield an in-depth look at the issue of leading for educational equity. The criteria used to select participants built upon Singleton and Linton's (2006) definition of educational equity used by the Mapleton district.

> Raising the achievement of all students, while narrowing the gap between the highest and lowest performing students and eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories (Singleton & Linton, 2006).

According to this definition, certain principals had narrowed the achievement gap and contributed to the elimination of the racial achievement gap in the district.

To identify potential subjects, I looked at data from the district website for each school of the 200 total schools. Figure 8 shows a visual overview of the process of selecting participants from the 200 schools in the district. First, I removed any schools that had new principals, were established after 2005, did not meet AYP and/or had 15% or less African American or Hispanic students. I also eliminated schools my own children attended previously or at the time of the study and schools where I had served as an administrator or where I had personal connections. Once I completed this process, 27 of the 200 schools remained. Then, I reviewed the results from the state's yearly elementary, middle, and high school assessment exams for the years 2007- 2010, available on the state web site, to identify schools that had narrowed or eliminated the achievement gap among African-American and Hispanic subgroups.

I contacted the identified principals via e-mail, and sent each potential participant a memo and an overview of the study via e-mail (see Appendix A). I

Figure 3.1. *Purposeful Sampling Overview*

Purposeful Sampling Overview						
205 District Principals *(There are 200 schools in the district---5 special schools will not be included in the process)*						
	131 Elementary Schools		38 Middle Schools		25 High Schools	
A principal may have been categorized into multiple categories, so this chart shows the process to eliminate in order of the process application.						
Only grades K-2, grades 3-5, or grade 6	14	■	■	■	■	■
New principals *(or switched schools)*	18		4		5	
Established after 2005	2		2		1	
Less than 3 years as a principal in the school	21		9		2	
Did not meet AYP	2		8		0	
Conflict	9		1		5	
Less than 15% African American & less than 15% Hispanic	47		10		7	
	18		**4**		**5**	
State assessment review for 2007- 2010	Identified schools that had narrowed or eliminated the achievement gap among their African-American and Hispanic subgroups.					
	1 Elementary School Principal		1 Middle School Principal		1 High School Principal	
3 District Principals for the Study Sample						

scheduled an initial meeting after each principal agreed to participate in the study. At this

initial meeting, we discussed the study overview and reviewed the copy of the consent

form (see Appendix B). Each participant signed the informed consent form and understood they could withdraw from the study at any time (Creswell, 2003, p. 64).

Phase Two: Data collection. The data collection process fits with the key characteristics of a qualitative research as defined by McMillan (2004):

- Data was collected directly from interviews with the participants;
- The detailed narrative provided by that interview resulted in an in-depth understanding of principals leading for equity;
- The research focused on the participant's understanding of principals leading for equity.

Interviews served as the primary method data collection method in this study. Interviews took place with the participating principals at their schools, at a mutually agreed up on time that did not intrude on the school setting. The first two interviews occurred after the initial nodes were created based on current research. I conducted each interview using a standard interview protocol with each participant (see Appendix C). The interview questions connected to the Mapleton School District equity enduring understanding and essential questions. As I developed the interview questions I defined all key terms and determined their relationship to the research question. The third interview occurred after preliminary data analysis and focused on follow-up questions to gather information to clarify participant responses.

Principals were asked to share their stories and describe specific structures and processes that they established in their efforts to lead for educational equity. The interviews allowed me to probe more deeply into the principals' perspectives on leading for equity than I would have been able to with questionnaires. Data were collected and

analyzed using the guiding social justice framework. The framework guided the process of categorizing information collected through interviews. The final analysis and conclusions extended existing research on how principals promoted educational equity in their schools.

   Data management. During the interviews, I took copious notes and digitally recorded the dialogue to increase the validity of the data and reduce the possibility that important information would be lost. However, as McMillian (2004) noted, there are some issues with recordings. These issues included: "(a) the presence of the tape recorder may be inhibitive for some participants; (b) transcribing recordings is time-consuming; and (c) participants do not have anonymity with the researcher" (p. 113). Despite the issues involved in using a voice recorder, the benefits outweighed the potential negative effects. I discussed the value of using the recorder and the concept of anonymity, and I explained how each participant's identity would be protected. As a result, each agreed to the use of the digital recorder. I transcribed the interviews myself and then checked for accuracy against my notes. All interviews were saved as word processing files and NVivo 9.2 was used for analysis.

   Phase Three: Data analysis. After transcribing the interviews, I began the data analysis process. I used coding as the categorizing strategy. The connecting strategies put forth by Maxwell (1998) showed the relationships between the interviews and helped me to draw correlations between statements and events. Both strategies helped me to conduct a detailed data analysis. The initial coding system was based on the guiding conceptual framework. After beginning the analysis, it became evident that the coding system needed to be augmented using specific definitions for coding; as the data were

57

coded the categories became saturated, and new categories that were not anticipated in the coding system emerged. Reflecting on the methods before the interviews started and during data analysis helped me develop key analytic insights (Maxwell, 2004, p. 96).

Codes were created to categorize the information collected from the study participants. The codes captured the "substantive or descriptive beliefs" (Maxwell, 2004, p. 97). The following initial codes were created based on defining each work based on current research and its' connection to educational equity and social justice.

- Participant Questions
- Awareness of race
- Cultural awareness
- Racial identity
- Cultural identity
- Culture
- Expectations
- Monitoring and accountability
- Overcome inequities
- Processes
- Structures
- Professional development
- Promotion of effective teaching and learning
- Shared leadership
- Vision
- Relationships

I went back through each code and created a memo with the definition of the term and how it impacted my study.

After the data was organized and coded in NVivo, I searched for patterns or other categories in the information collected as part of the interviews. I developed follow-up questions based on the analysis of the first interview questions. I then ran multiple Nvivo queries for each of the nodes to determine the effectiveness of each question and determine follow up questions. The sorting of data using NVivo created sets of

data ready for analysis.

Schram (2003) identified the importance of theory in three ways: "connectedness, critique, and purposefulness" (p. 42). This study showed connectedness to the larger issue and body of knowledge of social justice that I have outlined in chapter 2. While analyzing the data, I sought to contribute to the understanding of how leading for educational equity is an outgrowth of social justice.

I ran reports using the data analysis software, NVivo 9.2. I utilized various coding queries to check the interview coding structure for accuracy. I used text query to find themes, advanced coding query to compare nodes and matrix coding query to compare coded text. I used the framework matrix to review interview answers and help identify follow-up questions for participants. These reports were instrumental in examining how different principals commented on aspects of leading for educational equity.

The data analysis process began during the interviews in the field. This was a key piece of the data analysis because, as the observer, I conducted an independent analysis of the participant's words during the interviews and noted my conclusions immediately after each interview was completed. I transcribed all of the recordings within 48 hours of the interview. Each participant then reviewed each transcript for accuracy. These "member-checks" increased the reliability of the data collected (Creswell, 2003, p. 196).

Data gathered during the first interview informed the next steps. The specifics of the coding structure were developed from the process of matching the key definitions to meaning units. After further analysis, I developed sub codes within the meaning unit of a specific main code. Descriptive codes were added and included information such as gender, principal school level, and experience of each participant. Key concepts were

59

coded from the participant's interviews. Patterns and themes that emerged from these codes were noted. In addition, I used Creswell's (1998) "Data-Analysis Spiral" as a tool to guide me through the data analysis process: "collecting relevant documents, managing the material acquired in the collection process, reading the available information critically, and representing the analyzed data" (See Table 1).

Table 1: Creswell's Data-Analysis Spiral

Step	Procedures	Examples
1	Data Collection	Text, Images
2	Data Managing	Files, Units, Organize
3	Reading, Memoing	Reflecting Writing notes across questions
4	Describing ,Classifying, Interpreting	Context, Categories, Comparisons
5	Representing, Visualizing	Matrix, Trees, Propositions
6		Account

Phase Four: Data cross case analysis. I searched for consistencies across the three principals interviews, while I also looked for evidence where the principals were similar and different. Explanations were offered when evidence was not consistent across the all principals. Themes emerged from these comparisons of the three principals. I will explore these themes in chapter 5. In chapter 6, conclusions were drawn based on the cross-case analysis and linked to current literature.

Standards of Validity, Quality and Verification

This section examines case study validity, quality, and verification standards. This research will go beyond the existing research to identify and present strategies that principals can adopt to promote educational equity in their schools.

Because self-reflection presents data from one perspective (Marshall & Rossman, 2011), I triangulated the interviews with data from the state website and non-public data shared by the principals. This was an important part of the study's data collection and data analysis. The use of additional data sources helped in the corroboration of school growth on various measures from the different participants.

There are numerous benefits to including running record overviews or audit trail (Marshall & Rossman, 2011), as it details the process used by the researcher. Most important, the explanation or the audit trail of the strategies used within this study will increase the transferability for future researchers studying the phenomenon of leading for educational equity (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In addition the audit trail increases the confirmability in regards to demonstrating the time that was taken for crosschecking and sampling. I outline these strategies in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2. *Running Record of Strategies*

Interviews were conducted.

I wrote notes during interviews about key concepts.

I transcribed the interviews myself.

Listening to transcripts, I wrote additional notes.

Notes were used during coding.

Coding was completed for each interview.

I looked at the questions & concepts for coding to see if the question was answered fully & if code matched coding definition.

Follow up questions were created based on the previous step.

Additional interview was scheduled & process repeated.

Reliability was increased by providing principals a copy of the notes after transcription. Yin (1994) asserts that "case study tactics", such as establishing a chain of evidence, and having participants review draft reports help address validity. The principals read the transcript and were able to add additional thoughts or correct areas where they may have wanted to add or make amendments to the comments they had made. After principals made those changes they signed the transcripts and shared any changes with me. After making any additional changes, the principals received a revised copy of the notes and an additional opportunity to make further changes. The principals reviewed data as part of the member check process (Miles & Huberman, 1994), and also completed accuracy checks of their interview transcripts. Some made changes to the transcripts or added more information to the question asked. This entire process was designed to ensure that the natural subjectivity of the researcher did not influence the transcription of the interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Ethical Responsibilities

As a researcher, I established trust with the principals to ensure their openness and establish a comfortable rapport throughout the study. I established this trust adhering to Schram's (2003) method of "honestly defining my insider presence and truthfully representing the purpose of my research" (p. 102).

I am a parent and central office administrator in this district. In addition to previously teaching in this district, my other experiences in the district include being a middle school assistant principal, a K-12 technology instructional specialist, and a K-12

staff development specialist. In the latter two positions, I worked across district clusters. Since I am passionate about this topic, I focused on being critical in my interpretations, thus to avoid becoming overly subjective (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The next section overviews the important issue of confidentiality.

Confidentiality. It was vital for participating principals to understand that the information they shared was completely confidential and would not be part of any district evaluation of their performance. Honoring confidentiality was key in establishing rapport with the principals and established the integrity of my study. The participants were not asked to reveal any other non-public information (age, gender, weight, address, or financial data) or other personal information (political, religious, cultural, family, or health and medical). In addition, the process for storing data ensured confidentiality. All of the field notes, school documents, logs, analysis notes, and other documents that identify participants, data that was not fully processed, researcher reflections, and data displays were kept in a locked file cabinet. In the analysis of coded information, I did not identify the participants by their actual names. Instead, I used a coded system, known only to me, to protect the confidentiality of the participants. The voice recordings were saved on a password protected computer with the password known only to me. When the dissertation is complete, the recordings will be deleted.

Informed consent. For this study, I used an informed consent form, so that the principals were fully aware of my study's purpose and audience, as well as the details of participating in the study (See Appendix B). As a result, their consent to participate in the study indicated their true understanding of the undertaking and their acknowledgement that they could have withdrawn at any time without penalty (Schram, 2003).

The university Institutional Review Board approval was received in 2010 and renewed in 2011. The approval of the school district was a crucial part of the study, since the district required an executive level staff member support the study before approval was granted.

Summary

This multi-case study was designed to include in-depth interviews to gain further understanding of how principals promote educational equity in their schools. The study sought a "deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences of the phenomenon" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 60). In chapters 4 and 5, I present the findings of the study.

Chapter 4: Findings

I begin this chapter with a description of the district context within the Mapleton School District. I then array the demographic data (school level, ethnicity, and gender) of the study participants, Abigail, Beverly and Clyde. Next, I provide a comparison of the demographics for each participant's school. Finally, I present detailed descriptions of each principal's efforts to lead for educational equity.

District Context

The Mapleton School District was one of the largest school districts on the east coast. This public school system recognized a moral imperative to achieve equity for all student subgroups and eliminate racial disparities (District report, 2009). Between 2005 and 2011, when this study was conducted, the quarterly Superintendent's Administrative and Supervisory meetings concentrated on issues surrounding race and its impact on teaching and learning. The district had an equity team that worked directly with schools and offices to identify and remove "institutional barriers to student success, replacing them with equitable practices to eliminate racial disparities in achievement (district website)". In addition, this district created a data meeting that provided a framework for the systematic and systemic "monitoring of critical student achievement and performance data that enables the district and school leadership teams to identify issues regarding disaggregated data" (district website).

The district expected principals to take the key lessons from these meetings about the impact of race on teaching and learning back to their schools; however, not all principals followed this mandate. The mandate was unmonitored, and as a result, the

principals developed their own processes and plans to meet the district superintendent's directive.

Over the next two years, the Board of Education saw limited progress. In response, the district Board of Education revised their academic priorities in 2007, to include seven key goal areas. Their goal was "to provide rigorous instruction and promote increased achievement for all students, while eliminating the achievement gap" (district website). To measure how schools met these goals, the Board created performance targets, for kindergarten through grade 12, that required schools to demonstrate a "commitment to eliminating the achievement gap in student performance by race and ethnicity and other student groups" (District's Call to Action, p. iii). In addition, the Board of Education mandated that teacher beliefs, school team structures, professional development planning and culture be aligned to improve the district's schools.

In July 2008, the Board of Education approved a new edition of the strategic plan, which reflected "[a] focus on issues of equity and race that contribute to gaps in performance for specific student subgroups" (district website). The update demonstrated the commitment of the Board of Education to using all relevant performance data to monitor and improve student achievement. The update continued to focus on monitoring and accountability, "using milestones and data points that identify clear targets for continuous improvement" (district website). The 2007 update to the strategic plan reflected the continuing commitment of the Board of Education to address the disproportionality that existed in the district by using the superintendent's district mandate to inspire principals to take action against such disparities. The school district

received national recognition for narrowing the achievement gap for African-American and Hispanic students in 2010. Again, principals did not receive a specific plan for reducing the disproportionality that existed, so some moved forward with their own plan and some did not take any action.

This study described several principals' efforts to promote educational equity in their schools, and examined their level of success in meeting the overarching goal of providing equal access to high-quality educational services for all children, regardless of their ethnic background. The participants s in this study were selected based on a sampling strategy outlined in chapter 3.

Table 2: Study Participants		
Gender	**Race**	**School Level**
Female	White	Elementary School
Female	African-American	Middle School
Male	White	High School

The table below provides an overview of the demographics of the three schools that the study participants lead. The following narratives tell the story of each individual school and detail how the principals are leading for educational equity in their buildings.

TABLE 3: SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS			
Student Ethnicity	**Abigail's Elementary School**	**Beverly's Middle School**	**Clyde's High School**
African-American	50.1%	47.7%	22.3%
Hispanic	17.2%	19.6%	45.5%
White	6.1%	13.7%	20.3%
Asian	22.3%	13.8%	8.3%
American Indian	0%	.2%	.1%
Pacific Islander	0%	.2%	.2%
Multiple Races	4.4%	4.7%	3.4%

Elementary School Principal: Abigail

Background and school data. Abigail's school was located in a suburban area in the district. The school served 413 students, an average enrollment compared to the other district elementary schools. The mobility rate for the school in 2010 was 14.9%, slightly higher than the average rate (13.4%) of all elementary schools in the district. The school experienced a number of changes during Abigail's 8-year tenure as principal. Since her first year as school leader, the FARMS rate increased by 5%, the school's mobility rate decreased by 1.5%, and the number of students receiving ESOL services increased by 5.7%. All of her teachers were highly qualified in 2010, which represented an 8% increase during her tenure.

The students at Abigail's school experienced a 3% increase on the second grade nationally normed test given by the district and an 18.3% increase on the reading section of the test. During her tenure, the scores of her African-American second graders increased 10.3% on the mathematics section and 13.8% on the reading section. The scores of her Hispanic second graders increased 10% on the mathematics section and 50% on the reading section.

During Abigail's first year as principal, all of the state test scores for African-American and Hispanic students in grades 3-5 increased, except grade 3 Reading, which decreased slightly. During the year this study was conducted, Abigail's school outscored the district in every area for African-American and Hispanic students in grades 3-5, with the exception of a 0.5% difference in grade 5 Reading for African-American students.

- The scores of her African-American third graders increased 7.9% on the mathematics section and 1.7% on the reading section.
- The scores of her Hispanic third graders increased 10% on the mathematics section and 50% on the reading section.
- The scores of her African-American fourth graders increased 29% on the mathematics section and 24.3% on the reading section.

- The scores of her Hispanic fourth graders increased 50% on the mathematics section and 50.4% on the reading section.
- The scores of her African-American fifth graders increased 30.7% on the mathematics section and 27.1 % on the reading section.
- The scores of her Hispanic fifth graders increased 25.3% on the mathematics section and 25% on the reading section.

Abigail's background. Abigail had been the principal of her elementary school for 8 years. Abigail exhibited a strong sense of self-awareness, which influenced her cultural and racial awareness. This self-awareness helped her show the teachers at her school the importance of understanding themselves before they attempted to understand the children that they were teaching.

Abigail provided several examples of personal experiences that illustrated her acceptance and celebration of people's differences. She grew up in a White suburb of Chicago, which later became an integrated town, and recalled discussing the idea of acceptance at an early age. She shared how the experience of having a sister with a disability, and later having a long relationship with a man who is of a different race, affected her worldview. Abigail discussed that she participated in White racial groups since she was white and Black racial groups due to her personal life. Her participation in the settings of two racial groups affected her thinking and perceptions about way she works with staff around the topic of racial awareness.

Racial awareness. Abigail worked alongside staff to discuss, "where our personal feelings come from. We did trainings and we tried to focus on feelings first, because your own personal ideals are going to drive your actions, and how you feel about other people." Abigail understood that adults have beliefs and misconceptions about race, and she saw the need to act in a planned and culturally competent way to understand the perspectives of her teachers. She sought to lead targeted discussions with her staff to

dispel racial myths and clearly set a vision for understanding race to change erroneous modes of thinking.

Abigail also shared her experiences with the concept of White privilege, "I've had some uncomfortable experiences, but you can hide that, being White." This understanding came from her experiences that allowed her to learn more about race.

Abigail implemented the district plan modeled at the quarterly administrative meetings. Abigail used her special educator background to look at data more deeply and disaggregated the data by race. She then took action based upon the patterns she found in the data, "for example, I had a teacher who only sent her Black kids to the office. We have a high minority rate, but it was always the same kids. Seeing these patterns allowed her to talk about race beyond the professional development book clubs settings and make connections to those discussions.

This understanding of the need for staff to have time to learn about race and unlearn years of misinformation allowed Abigail to lead her employees with a structured plan that led to daily staff discussions about race and its impact on the children in her school. All of these ideas and feelings that Abigail shared illustrated her journey along the continuum of racial awareness and her understanding of the impact of race on teaching and learning.

Abigail shared more about her experiences and how they impacted her racial and cultural identity. She felt that without her experiences, she could not successfully promote effective teaching and learning. She expressed her cultural understanding, "with all the different cultural experiences I've had, it helps me understand everything," which she felt impacted all her interactions with students, staff and parents.

Through her professional development experiences, Abigail had some "aha moments" and learned about different customs.

> I didn't realize that Muslim men really can't touch another woman…a single woman. It wasn't that they didn't want to shake my hand. I think that's where a lot of our unfortunate…our racism comes from…whether it is Blacks, gay people, Jewish people…people don't understand."

Professional development focused on race. Abigail's staff had a number of different professional development experiences around the concept of race. The staff looked at their unconscious behaviors and discussed the impact of those behaviors during the professional development times. In addition, Abigail shared stories from students' perspectives for discussion. The staff was building their racial awareness and staff shared their own experiences with race. Abigail shared with the group Singleton's (2006) discussion about colorblindness as harmful to children, and she agreed with his assessment.

Abigail explained to the group the importance of looking at the whole child and recognizing their differences. She was open to perspectives of people of races different from her own, and used her assistant principal as an example. She was an African-American female, and Abigail appreciated the differing perspective she brought to the table.

Abigail searched for ways to bring cultural identity to the forefront at her school, and she understands that someone's culture affects all aspects of their life. As the school is the center of the community, she and her staff find ways for students and staff members of all cultures in the community to socialize and learn more about each other. Abigail felt a strong moral imperative to help kids that the educational system otherwise might have overlooked. "This is the only opportunity some of these kids will ever have. I

want to work to reach those kids that might get shoved aside somewhere else. The parents are counting on us to do what's best for their kids. This is the focus…for the teachers to understand [that] for some of the kids, we are all they have right now."

Abigail was one of the few principals who implemented the district plan overviewed at the administrative and supervisory meetings. Many schools either did not implement the suggested professional development plan at all or failed to implement it with fidelity. Abigail explained that she also offered additional professional development for staff on the topic of cultural competency. She clarified that she was not nervous discussing race. She acknowledged that racism existed. Abigail wanted her staff to understand that her commitment to African-American and Hispanic children was not a byproduct of her personal life: "I wanted people to understand this wasn't because my boyfriend was Black. This was what was best for kids." She felt it important that her staff understand that her commitment resulted from her conviction that all of her students deserved to be understood and taught based on their strengths and needs as individuals.

Abigail revealed her deep understanding of how racial and cultural identity affected classrooms by her sharing her belief, "You can't understand your children if you can't understand yourself or people outside yourself." Abigail tried to serve as a model for her staff in demonstrating the importance of this self-reflection and awareness.

Professional development is key to helping teachers become proficient with culturally competent instruction. Abigail noted that having monthly data chats helped improve instruction. She also found discussions about specific students, or "kid talk," particularly helpful in improving instruction. The topic of race often emerges during

these discussions, and Abigail addressed the matter through a discussion of student specific data.

Abigail expressed that time is the biggest obstacle to the type of discussions that develop into true understandings about race. Not having the time to plan structured conversations or to go back and bring new staff into the professional development also was an issue. She also noted that district budget cuts had influenced her professional development focus. The district cut the budget for substitutes for school-structured staff development time. The lack of resources negatively affected her ability to further professional development opportunities on race in a structured way for all teachers or to measure the impact of the sessions.

Data structures to support and monitor instruction. Abigail passionately shared her belief that her teachers needed to understand their students before they could teach them effectively. As mentioned above, the teachers had "kid talks," where they discussed individual children and their needs. The students' teachers and counselors conferred about what was working and not working instructionally and included any outside information or factors that might have been affecting the child. This weekly conference allowed the teachers to plan instruction based on student needs, instead of blindly following the curriculum.

Abigail linked her frequent data chats with her vision of viewing the whole child. She encouraged teachers to include these charts into kid talk meetings. Openly discussing key information about each child ultimately helps teachers develop better understandings of each student. Recording accurate data was essential to this process. Under the previous principal's administration, faculty and staff did not always document

disciplinary actions, like suspensions, on student records. At the time of our interview, the school averaged less than five referrals per week. "We created structures…a committee, to look at the problem to create new discipline policy; a problem solving sheet to be completed by teachers before referring kids; changed recess to individual grade recess."

Abigail was clear about her expectations for her teachers and clearly communicated these expectations to staff on an ongoing basis. For example, she required that teachers demonstrate the same type of stellar attendance they expected from their students. In addition, she expected teachers to collect data daily and weekly to guide their instruction. "I expect teachers to know their kids inside and out. We do data chats so I can talk about attendance, tardies, whether kids are making improvement, and which interventions are working." The data chat structure helped her teachers focus on a collaborative planning structure, and she expected them to bring their daily and weekly data to the table as they discussed individual students. Abigail would not move forward with additional interventions unless teachers demonstrated the interventions were warranted through their individual student data.

Abigail discussed how she applied her cultural awareness to her everyday practice by describing her clear structures for discipline and raising test scores. She disaggregated the data on each by race and discussed the trends with teachers at staff meetings. "The first thing we did was a discipline plan and a homework plan. Every group was involved: teachers, students and parents. I started collecting data about referrals…who is being referred? Males? African-Americans? We are 53% African-American. I looked at the

data by neighborhood, by teacher, by gender, and by grade level. I did home visits and tried to establish the feeling that we are all in this together."

After these discussions, the group would act on the conclusions they drew from the data. The process of developing action plans from the data proved another opportunity to offer professional development on equity, and Abigail sought to help teachers understand themselves, so they can better understand the students that they taught.

Abigail put several structures in place for monitoring and accountability at her school, which included student staffing meetings, team meetings, and the collaborative-solving planning special education screening team. The use of these structures changed teachers' utilization of formative or instructional data, from a twice a year model to a monthly, weekly and daily tool for planning purposes. Most importantly, these team meetings improved the quality of instruction at the school, because teachers "know their kids. It is changing their instruction because they know their kids. That's the bottom line." "Data chats have helped as a structure."

Abigail again demonstrated her strong moral imperative to help kids who had been overlooked historically by the school system. "If you ask anybody here, they will say that I believe in the kids and I want the kids to know that I believe in them 100%." She acted on her beliefs of high expectations for all children. Her vision for the school was clear: All of the students would be prepared for college. To that end, last year her fifth graders entered middle school with 100% proficiency in reading.

Abigail focused her decisions around instruction and felt that the new district curriculum would be beneficial for all of her students, and she was an early adopter of the

new rollout. She sought opportunities for her students to gain access to rigorous

instruction. Taking advantage of being an early adopter meant her staff had more time to

discuss implementation and early access to professional development at her school.

Abigail shared the grade level team collaborative planning structure to provide team time.

She also implemented her focus on data in collaborative planning time. Abigail

frequently emphasized to her staff her belief that, "We are the only shot some of these

kids have-- so we have to give them whatever we can give."

At the time of the study, Abigail had begun designing a professional development

book study opportunity for her instructional leadership team. The book began with a

discussion of expectations. All of her leadership team members felt that teachers'

expectations affected students and "students rise to the occasion when you set high

expectations". Abigail stated that one teacher shared, "By praising students for routine

accomplishments, it sends the message you think we can do better on more…[When]

teachers formulate negative perceptions and judgments towards their students, it impact

on their teaching, and the effort they put into making change." Abigail was leading her

team toward utilizing "look-fors" that will be created based on their learning. Her goal

for that year was to use their learning to analyze classroom instruction.

Abigail and her assistant principal also used teacher observations as part of the

monitoring focus, "Teachers want to hear the feedback to improve their practice."

Looking at teacher practice and data analysis was one way to change the internal

structure of teachers' isolation, which caused inequity in student data to go under the

radar before her tenure.

Building leadership capacity. At the time of the study, Abigail was revisiting a book on race, anti-racist practices, and White privilege with her instructional leadership team. The team discussed what it meant to be racist. During the discussion, Abigail shared her development of understanding about White privilege has come from other people in her life impacting her learning. She was more conscious now and shared that her life experiences impacted her awareness of race in social situations. "I've learned and I am aware. I think about this now. I am more conscious."

Abigail credited her background in special education for her laser like data focus for looking at each child as an individual. She demonstrated her focus on monitoring and utilizing data disaggregated by race to ensure all children have access to rigorous instruction. "Instructional interventions start when school starts" and she ensured the interventions were linked to student needs, not artificial test preparation.

Abigail also held student staffing meetings with her teachers, and described them as an opportunity to talk about individual children. The internal school structure that she established allowed staff to look at any inequities within the data so they could address the cause. This collaborative approach allowed them to come up with ideas, and try them to see if they turned into a solution for an issue a student may be having. This collaborative problem solving approach was a process for teachers to use to work together as grade level teams. This approach changed the culture of her school from isolated acts of data analysis to a culture of collaboration. This culture exhibited a sense of trust as teachers shared their data publicly with their team and made their triumphs and challenges transparent to their colleagues in a safe, cooperative environment.

Middle School Principal: Beverly

Background and school data. Beverly was a middle school principal, and had served in her current position for seven years. Beverly's school was located in a suburban area in the district. The school's enrollment of 903 students was above average compared to the other district middle schools. The school was one of the ten largest middle schools in the district. The mobility rate for the school was 14.6%, compared with the middle school district rate of 10 percent.

The school experienced a number of changes during Beverly's tenure as principal. The school's enrollment had remained relatively stable since Beverly became principal, and 26.6% fewer students were spending less than 40% of instructional time in general education classes. The school had also experienced a 6.2% decrease in the suspension rate. Her school's percentage of highly-qualified teachers had decreased however, with a 14.3% drop to less than 8 percent.

Since Beverly became principal, the Algebra completion rate increased 12.5% for African-American students and 20.6 % for Hispanic students. In 2010, the school's scores on the state test increased in all grade levels for African-American and Hispanic students.

- The scores of her African-American six graders increased 24.9% on the mathematics section and 21% on the reading section.
- The scores of her Hispanic six graders increased 31.9% on the mathematics section and 23.4% on the reading section.
- The scores of her African-American seventh graders increased 21.9% on the mathematics section and 14.9% on the reading section.
- The scores of her Hispanic seventh graders increased 33.7% on the mathematics section and 30.8% on the reading section.
- The scores of her African-American eighth graders increased 12.9% on the mathematics section and 24.4 % on the reading section.
- The scores of her Hispanic eighth graders increased 19.9% on the mathematics section and 31.4% on the reading section.

Beverly's racial and cultural identity. Beverly demonstrated a strong cultural awareness and an understanding of her own cultural identity when she stated, "I think, in regards to understanding the racial and cultural concepts of any particular group…you have to recognize the nuances…the importance of background and history on a particular culture." Beverly understood that culture went beyond what one could visibly see about another person. She demonstrated her deep cultural awareness through her understanding of the need to look beyond your own cultural experience and perspectives, "[S]tepping outside and being able to think and understand others through the lens or perspective….and infuse with another, and how does that impact your sense of being and who you are?"

Beverly again displayed her racial and cultural understanding through her acknowledgement of the boxes that society placed around people of different cultures and races. As a principal, Beverly promoted teaching and learning in her building by ensuring teachers understood the need for students to be self-aware and develop their own sense of academic, racial, and cultural identity. She illustrated this key belief with her statement, "who we are as educators really plays the most integral part of a child's educational success or lack thereof…their maturation…their socialization." Beverly sought to ensure that both teachers and students understood these concepts. "I think those kind of nuances cannot be stated enough times in terms of how important they are, and the lasting impact that we have is just phenomenal."

Beverly shared that as an African-American female who excelled in math, her education framed so much of what she did with her life, and understanding her culture was key as she tried to foster her propensity for math. She further explained the

importance of self-awareness and how it factored into her life, "It's really who I am, and what do I bring to the table…You have to know yourself before you can teach others who are different than you are in your classroom."

Beverly's understanding of how her own race influenced her practice also affected her commitment to understanding other races and cultures. She classified herself as, "[a] representative of [many] different groups [at] any given moment in time." She discussed the importance of modeling positive behaviors and words in a way that was sensitive to other cultures.

Beverly believed that when the staff did not share that feeling of urgency, it became an obstacle to moving her vision forward. Beverly encouraged her students and teachers to avoid negative statements, look at the facts, and make determinations to see if the school is doing what is best for all students. She expected the staff to take that urgent action on behalf of students. These efforts included helping the child after school, communicating with parents, and utilizing the language line for translations. She explained, "[R]eferrals were 800 a year my first year, and now, with the structures we have put in place, we are 8-10 or less per week." Beverly talked with staff about the expectation that students are in class to learn. She tied decreases in suspensions to the development of a strong instructional program. "I still remember we had 222 the year before I got here, 80 my first year, and now we are meeting the 6.4% district goal."

According to Beverly, her biggest obstacle would be "folks always understanding that it is now, the present that we need to make an impact on." Beverly was clear that teachers needed to understand each individual child. The expectations for students were high no matter what their personal circumstance. Again, she revealed her cultural

identity as she stated, "I believe my culture plays a huge role in understanding and moving staff and parents." Her focus was on understanding the child's race and culture and how that impacts each child's learning.

Building the instructional program-based on data. Beverly had her school start discussions about structures at the ground level, the "how and why around the framework of the instructional program.", so they could build the program together. The staff looked at the schedule, instructional program, community interactions, and their effort to be "champion[s] for children." Beverly explained that the team began with course offerings and reworked the structure to focus on "what a full comprehensive middle school program looks like to meet the needs of each child, not to meet the needs of staff." According to Beverly, they focused on staffing, leadership, and "not being afraid to look within to see who we really were deep down. To peel back the layers to see what it really looks like."

Beverly believed that the practice of using data to look at each individual child was invaluable. She explained,

> We divided our students into three tiers: students who regressed, bubble (10 pts up or down), or basic. Teachers had to look through the lens of reflection to determine how they might change their practice…We came full circle when we exited school improvement, because we showed regardless of disability, demographics, or income you can succeed. It was a matter of sticking with it and showing the examples. We involved parents, students, and teachers.

Beverly commented several times that everything the staff did was based on data. She explained that data framed all conversations. According to Beverly, some of the strengths of the school were that they were consistent with using the teacher created instruction decision trees to guide course selection for students, using the same assessments, and adhering to assessment timelines. "Our data monitoring tool lets us see

81

the child's entire educational background in all areas. Everything has to be concrete in data. What do the numbers say? What does the child need?" Beverly shared some examples of what she called "maybe racism" and explained how her experiences showed her that "the world is not always open."

She explained, "[W]e had to look at the overrepresentation of students who are in special education in our numbers. How much time are students missing instructional? Those specifics (in house data gets the big picture) are helping during the annual review." Her goal was to ensure that students receiving special education services were included in general education classes to the fullest extent possible.

Impact of professional development focused on race. Beverly felt her experiences impacted why she wanted teachers to view students through the lens of educational needs. Beverly emphasized that race was not to play a factor in the way her staff treated their students. To encourage their cultural understanding, Beverly organized a workshop that focused on African-American males, which was the group most often referred by teachers to the office. She commented, "I don't think we have a clue about African-American males…of what they go through on any given day, and this helped staff unpack the African-American male mentality and understanding who they are historically and how they haven't been able to escape it."

Beverly shared that the knowledge they gained in that workshop became evident in how teachers promoted equity. Staff started using data to make instructional decisions. When they examined the data, they changed names to letters to maintain anonymity. Beverly found that "when we took the race out of it, teachers would use the data, and not other reasons to keep students out of class." She credited this workshop with helping

staff to see that "this may be the first African-American male academically successful in a family, and they could provide and support that success." She encouraged her staff to consider, "will you…contribute to [the] downward spiral, or will you be the one to uplift?"

Building leadership through common structures. Beverly's leadership team and departments discussed student performance by looking at data divided into subgroups. The data included summative data, course grades, final exams, and state assessments. The school had "access and equity" meetings to discuss the data. She described the staff's courageous conversations around the actions they should take based on the data. Without decisive action, the data were "just numbers on a piece of paper." The teachers created decision trees that helped them develop instructional plans that included all students. Beverly saw the staff taking more ownership of the monitoring tool based on teachers making suggestions about the tool based on their work with the data as their resource for decision making.

Beverly looked at monitoring and building a tool with her team. This was a collaborative process, and she provided training on the technical aspects along with the questions about how to use that data. As she built the system with her instructional leadership team, she examined processes and structures for using the data and discussing the data. "You need to know how to have conversations these were courageous conversations and how to have these conversations with teachers without them being defensive see you can move people along." She created a culture where teachers became comfortable using data, and the culture shifted to one of openness. Teachers no longer felt that they would be chastised for not knowing how to look at data. The district

modeled their tools after the ones she created with her instructional team. "You can't remain stagnant—each year as principal there is something else to improve, which can be overwhelming—you're never done."

High School Principal: Clyde

Background and School Data. At the time of our interview, Clyde had served as a high school principal for eight years. Clyde's school was located in a suburban area in the district. The school enrollment of 1,575 students was average compared to the other district high schools. The mobility rate for the school was 15.9%, compared with the high school district rate of 10.4 percent.

The school experienced many changes during Clyde's tenure as principal. Since Clyde became principal, there was a 7.2% increase in the FARMS rate, a 4.7% decrease in the schools' mobility rate, and a 5.1% decrease in the suspension rate. The school enrollment decreased slightly, and the schools' percentage of highly-qualified teachers was at less than 6% in 2010, which was a 14.3% increase.

Under Clyde's administration, the number of students given the opportunity to take the Advanced Placement classes at the school increased significantly by 81%, and performance on the Advanced Placement tests increased for African-American and Hispanic students. At the time of the interview, the school's scores on the state test had increased in all grade levels for African-American and Hispanic students. In addition, Clyde's school outperformed the district scores for African-American and Hispanic students.

- Increased 56.5% African American mathematics
- Increased 60.1% Hispanic mathematics

- Increased 37.9% African American reading
- Increased 33.5% Hispanic reading

The twelfth grade high school assessment for African American students:
- 55.6% increase Algebra
- 44.6% increase Biology
- 34.6% increase English
- 26.3% increase Government

The twelfth grade high school assessment for Hispanic students:
- 68.3% increase Algebra
- 40.4% increase Biology
- 32.6% increase English
- 34.5% increase Government

In addition, the scores increased for students receiving ESOL and special education services.

Shared leadership focused on the individual student. Clyde expressed a sense of racial understanding as he discussed how he shared data with his staff. He commented that by sharing the African-American student scores and discussing this as a staff during his first year as principal, the SAT scores rose by 140 points the next year. Clyde demonstrated that he was comfortable putting race on the table and disaggregating data by race. By disaggregating data by race with his staff, he built their awareness and understanding of data the first year.

Clyde discussed data first with the leadership team and then with staff. He spent time making sure his leaders were able to speak to the data. He felt it important that all staff understood how race affected students' educational experiences. He was clear about his expectation that staff address the disparity in scores. Clyde demonstrated an awareness of race and was comfortable talking with staff about race. He discussed an awareness of racism in other schools, but did not feel it was an issue at his school. He

stated that he would not tolerate racism or discrimination towards students, and he made that crystal clear to his staff.

Clyde had also established an enhanced data team and described their methods of monitoring data. He developed structures for data analysis, which included a team that analyzed the data. His shared leadership approach is evident and showed that the development of racial sensitivity was a priority shared among all leaders, not just the principal.

They clearly articulated their system for "drilling down" to the individual student. Clyde also created a new internal program called the "30/30 program," which has had evident impact. Clyde explained that through this new program, the staff identified 30 African-American students and 30 Hispanic students, based on data that indicated which students were at the lowest level of achievement but should have been achieving at a much higher level. Once staff identified the students, they each received a mentor.

Clyde shared that the focus of the data team model was ESOL and special education students' performance on the state mandated tests. The schools' scores consistently outperform schools with lower FARMS rates. Clyde explained, "We are 68% FARMS (or ever FARMS), we are 78% minority status, and we make AYP, where 12 other high schools didn't." Again, Clyde shared that they monitor the individual progress of students.

Clyde's focus on building relationships with his students showed his dedication to the individual child. Clyde expressed a deep understanding of how school culture impacts teaching and learning. His approach to shared leadership showed his style of leading for

relationship building and data analysis, one child at a time. His expectations for teaching

and learning were clear, and he involved students in his feedback process for teachers.

He credited the school's success to the creation of environments where teachers

felt comfortable with the clear focus on teaching the students. They did not have a

laundry list of foci. Clyde showed his understanding of the connection between teachers'

understanding the students they teach and their ability to teach those students by his focus

on relationships.

The students had access to rigorous courses for International Baccalaureate

classes. He encouraged the staff to push themselves to educate all students. Clyde told

staff that they also were responsible for being school leaders.

> The middle states program review came, and they said there were two strengths:
> diversity and the principal. That would be great for me if I wanted to be the chief
> school whatever… I talked to staff and told them that is not what we wanted to
> hear. What we wanted to hear [was that] instruction was a strength, the level of
> questionings, the quality of assignments, stimulating classes, challenging lessons
> from teachers…That's what we want to hear.

Clyde was transparent about the data, and shared the data directly with staff. He

felt the focus on the kids gets the results. Kids are first. Clyde shared many examples of

building trust with the students and caring about them beyond test scores and grades.

Clyde again showed his focus on data and results as he stated, "We're 9th or 10th on SAT

scores-- it's not a fluke-we're higher than some of the fancy schools."

Clyde applied his racial and cultural understanding in how he originally

introduced himself to staff via a Spanish-speaking student, so he could highlight how the

ESOL students felt in their school. He is clear about relationship building and ensuring

that all students have the goal of earning a high school diploma. Again, Clyde

demonstrated his shared leadership approach as he stated,

I am an honest guy. Everything is individual attention. I don't see an obstacle, and I don't panic. Calm leadership comforts the staff. I don't have to run the show-I make suggestions. I hire good people. I don't see obstacles, only opportunities to improve.

School culture and relationships. Clyde created an "ISIS: in school in-service" initiative, which happened monthly to allow teachers to hear student voices. Clyde shared, "[W]hen I got here, the survey said 42% of the kids wanted to go to school here. Now were in the 90's. It's about respect-- and we listen to the kids." He continued, "[O]ur referrals have gone down, and our suspensions have gone down that shows the effectiveness." Clyde sought to create an environment with a focus on trust, where it is okay to make mistakes. He explained,

> I let people focus on teaching, and I try to take care of the rest of the stuff. I don't create a huge bureaucracy here. I'm not focused on forms. The instructional leadership team…we make shared decisions. but I don't want extra stuff on my teacher shoulders. I want them to teach. I treat them like professionals. Period.

Clyde clearly conveyed his vision of reaching every child to his staff.

> We're going to be successful with every child. We may not reach that goal, but we're sure going to try. Since I've been here, I've tried to make sure that people have pride in our school. Unbelievable…It's unbelievable how so many cultures and races get along. We treat the kids with respect.

Clyde believed that school culture was linked with relationships. He explained how this translated to the school environment:

> Our staff is very person focused. For example, we collect money to help our students during Thanksgiving. It's a culture of respect. If a student writes me a note, I write a letter and mail it to her house. It's about responding. We spend a lot of time preaching in addition to teaching. We're always talking about how the student should be respectful of each other…of their teachers, but we model that so they know it's not just talk. I'm very visible and in the hallways. I'm out on Main Street sitting at the table-- I'm available to the kids and available to staff. I'm also in the hallway, so we know what's going on with to connect with the kids. It's about the kids. It's a culture of great respect.

Clyde demonstrated a clear knowledge of how relationship building with students affected their education. He called their school "[a] relationship building high school." Clyde established that they focused on the whole child, and he revealed an understanding of students' racial and cultural identity, but also a focus on the personal lives of individual students. He discussed the focus on each student and the impact of belonging to the school.

> We have a reputation that we will take every kid who wants to come here. If another high school kicks him out, we'll take them. Those kids kill you because they dropout. We took two kids last year that had just gotten out of jail. I have the reputation…we'll teach every kid. They may hurt us on the state test, but I'll take them. We are kid-centered.

Student-centered data focus. Clyde was transparent with staff about data and expectations. Clyde showed his focus on disaggregated data on AYP, SAT and the district data focus point model. "We do that, but we don't say that there are many foci-- we focus on AYP, SAT, and the system data targets." Again, Clyde put race on the table through the use of data. Clyde discussed rigorous instruction on the high school challenge index:

> [We] were 294 of 20,000 high schools…We support kids, and they trust us when we put them in a class that's the challenge them. You can't just put a child in an advanced class without support if they haven't had the chance to experience challenge before. We push them, but we support them. We support the AP and IB. We push this, because our kids don't have a lot of money, and they can get some of the college credits here for free. We make sure all of our kids have access for AP-- and we look at how we can improve the scores but we don't turn any kids away. We don't just put kids and that will make our scores look good.

He worked to motivate his students and his staff. Clyde described his role as one of motivation and oversight, as he empowered his staff to oversee their own instructional content areas.

Summary

89

The three principals described their efforts to lead for educational equity in their schools. In the first case, Abigail, a principal of an elementary school with low state test scores led the school through the development of a vision through the new discipline plan and a staff development focus. Then she led the school's instructional focus through focusing the staff on data analysis. Through the professional development focused on race, Abigail helped create a culture that was focused on student achievement for all students.

In the second case, Beverly, a principal of a middle school with low state test scores, led the school through changing demographics in their school to the development of a commitment for all students. Her perceived inequities in the instructional program led to the use of data for all aspects of the instructional program. She encouraged staff to analyze existing structures and make changes to support students, instead of keeping them out of higher-level classes.

In the third case, Clyde, a principal of a high school with low state test scores led the school through building relationships with students and staff. He focused on building a environment where teachers and students had pride in their school. He hired great teachers and built a leadership team that implemented his vision for looking at data analysis and all pieces of the instructional program.

Chapter 5 will provide an overview of the cross-case analysis of the case studies, to identify the similarities and differences in the principals' actions, beliefs, and results. This analysis of their cases will help determine the themes that exist across the case studies.

Chapter 5: Cross-Case Analysis

This study sought to determine how principals promote educational equity in their schools. A cross-case analysis reveals patterns in principals' efforts to promote educational equity in their schools. This cross case analysis explored themes that emerges across the three cases.

The literature proposed that the principals played a key role in promoting educational equity in their schools. In this chapter, I report the findings from the study and explore whether the resulting data supports or refutes the tenets put forth in existing research. The cross-case analysis indicated that the following four conditions emerged as principals sought to promote equity within their schools: leadership, equity focus, practices and structures. Table 4 outlines the conditions and each sub-category.

Table 4: Conditions Principals Utilized to Promote Equity

Practices	*Structures*	*Equity Focus*	*Leadership*
Relationships	Data analysis	Focus on race and culture (awareness and identity)	Shared leadership
School culture	Monitoring tool	Awareness of racism	Trust
Promotion of effective teaching and learning	Monitoring instruction		Vision
	Use of student voice		Expectations
	Professional development		

Practices

All three principals put the following practices in place to address inequity: building relationships, building school culture and the promotion of effective teaching and learning. Each area is described in this section.

Relationships. All three principals discussed the importance of teacher-student

relationships and acknowledged the benefits of connecting to each child individually.

They each described how such connections to students affected instruction and the

overall climate in the building. Clyde described the focus on relationships and linked this

focus to his rising SAT scores. He gave numerous examples of how he maintained a

focus on students in his building:

> The whole school is like [a] relationship building high school. I mean, that's exactly what we do. We have the second highest FARMS rate, and the eighth highest SAT scores out of the 24 high schools. It's been that way for three years. The first year, people thought it was an anomaly. Now, they're wondering what we're doing over here. (Clyde, Interview 1)

> Clyde also noted that being so "kid-centered" sometimes hurt their high school

standing or test scores, but he explained that they look beyond that challenge to help

every student.

> We are one of the two most requested schools in the county for transfers. We have a reputation that we will take every kid who wants to come here. If another high school kicks him out, we'll take them. Those kids kill you on scores because they dropout. We took two kids last year that had just gotten out of jail. I have the reputation…we'll teach every kid. They may hurt us on the state test, but I'll take them. We are kid-centered. We expose kids who would never see the AP/IB level of instruction…who normally would never see that level…I put them in regardless of whether they will earn a three in a course. (Clyde, Interview 2)

Clyde was the only principal that linked relationships to his hiring practices. He

explained, "When I hire teachers, I have a special sign that says, 'we hire personality.' I

tell them, 'If you're not the person you would want in front of your child's classroom,

please do not sit down.'" Clyde also gave an example that described his relationships

with students and the power of being connected. He stated, "I had an example today of

the child who lost his wallet. I waived his obligations, and I know he'll be coming back to

pay as much as he can. But that way, he can get his prom ticket--kids don't forget that kind of stuff. That's what we do here."

Beverly also discussed the state of connectedness between teachers and students in her school. She explained that teachers did not always realize the power of the teacher-student relationships, because they worked with so many students each day. Beverly discussed the importance of developing a rapport with her teachers on a regular basis. She felt the, "role that we play where a student will have a memory, and a child will look back to an experience in a particular class or classroom, a close proximity they had to the teacher or the way they were treated or greeted beforehand, and that means something."

Beverly also noted the importance of serving as role models for Hispanic and African-American students:

> With that being said, there are always many, many that you don't hear about, who also benefited from exposure or having that person to look to. Again, it's usually that one person that you can identify with…to understand where they're coming from. It doesn't have to be President Obama for them to see that an African-American male can be successful. They can see it with a paraeducator [or] parent volunteer, but they have to be able to identify within themselves what is good, what they value, how they want to express themselves, and how they want the world to see them. (Beverly, Interview 1)

Beverly felt that teachers have a cultural impact on relationships when they considered ways they gave feedback. She gave an example of a foreign language teacher who recognized that there are hundreds of Spanish-speaking countries and cultures during her lesson. Beverly stated that because that teacher recognized that, it made the students understand and she saw students respond with an attitude of, "I want to do well for you", because the teacher didn't make the assumption all Spanish speakers were from the same country. She explained to teachers that these relationships thrive when they know, "who [they are] and what [they] bring to the table."

93

Abigail expressed her belief that to build relationships with students, teachers needed to reflect on their personal feelings. Abigail, like Beverly, referenced the role of race in the relationship-building process.

> What do you feel like? How are your feelings around seeing Black people next to your car – do you lock your door? It's different with students and parents. When parents come –do they look at them as being educated are not educated? [A] lot of it is self-reflection first…[understanding] where your personal feelings come from…We did trainings. We tried to focus on feelings first, because your own personal ideals are going to drive your actions and how you feel about other people, (Abigail, Interview 2)

> **School culture.** Although Clyde was the only principal that referenced the

associations between culture, relationships, and respect; all three principals mentioned culture in their discussions of the students. Clyde described his school's culture:

> School culture is about relationships. Kids and teachers aren't ashamed to be here-- we've changed the reputation. Kids have pride now and our school. I do this all the time when I'm interviewing people. I describe our school as unbelievable…it's unbelievable how so many cultures and races get along. We treat the kids with respect. Our staff is very person-focused. For example, we collect money to help our students during Thanksgiving. It's a culture of respect. If a student writes me a note I write a letter and mail it to her house. It's about responding. We spend a lot of time preaching in addition to teaching. We're always talking about how the students should be respectful of each other… of their teachers; but we model that, so they know it's not just talk. I'm very visible and in the hallways. I'm out on Main Street sitting at the table-- I'm available to the kids and available to staff. I'm also in the hallway, so we know what's going on with kids--to connect with the kids. It's about the kids. It's a culture of great respect. We personalize one on one to each child…teach everyone. I asked him respectfully, "Take off your hat." We're about respect. Our test scores are tied to the culture-- kids want to do well for us (Clyde, Interview 3).

Beverly also agreed with Clyde's belief that students are the focus of the school. Beverly talked about the need for consistency and having a leader that listens to staff.

> Staff want you to have high expectations and be fair and consistent, and they want you to listen. If you can do all those things, the school culture is better off; but as the leader, you are not everyone's friend. The ultimate goal is that you are here for the kids. We do a really good job of always looking through the eyes of the child. (Beverly, Interview 2)

Abigail agreed with Clyde and Beverly that the children should be the top priority in the

school. However, Abigail was the only principal that linked school culture with cultural

awareness. She shared that her school has tried to focus on building community and

learning about different cultures through international nights and other school events.

> I want teachers to know everything they can about the kids. The thing that was
> needed here was visibility. I am in classrooms and at recess. I know my kids. The
> former principal was not at school a lot and spent a lot of time in his office (he
> was a wonderful man). (Abigail, Interview 3)

Promotion of effective teaching and learning. Although each principal focused

on promoting teaching and learning, the data revealed no commonalities in how they

achieved this goal. Clyde sought to create an environment where teachers focused on

teaching and learning by taking away the bureaucracy of a large school system and

serving as a buffer for his teachers. He explained his efforts:

> I create environments where teachers are comfortable and can do their thing. I let
> people focus on teaching and I try to take care of the rest the stuff. I don't create a
> huge bureaucracy here. I'm not focused on forms. I focus on what they need. We
> don't do fancy-- you know how to teach, or you wouldn't be here. I treat them like
> professionals. Period.

Clyde also referenced the idea of effort from teachers. He explained that he saw effort

from teachers as the key to effective instruction. Teachers should be giving 100 percent

to students. He shared with staff, "If you're the best, and I get the effort from you as a

teacher, then we get results. If you can't teach all kids, I'll help you or get rid of you."

Clyde also emphasized the effort he expects from himself and his administrative

team. Clyde was the only principal who described his individual approach to working

with students. After the end of each marking period, Clyde met with individual students

that were failing English. He talked with each child for 15-20 minutes to discuss ways to improve and future goals.

When it was clear that students were not signing up for SAT help, he went to every junior level English class to promote the support class. As a result, 372 students signed up the next week. Clyde also talks with all senior English classes before graduation. He has a high level of focus on discussing learning with students.

> We asked the kids what they will miss when they graduate. A girl came and told me she would miss my Principal Life Talks. The decisions they make at 15 will affect the next six decades of their lives. Think about that. (Clyde, Interview 3)

Each principal discussed conducting classroom observations,, however Clyde was the only principal who discussed getting the student's perspective in the observation.

> I always take three kids with me back to my office. They write what was the objective, what did you learn, what was the homework? I ask them to define vocabulary teachers used in their lesson. I let the teachers know what their customer said about their service-- what worked, and where there were the missed opportunities for vocabulary. (Clyde, Interview 2)

Beverly also focused on creating an environment where teachers focus on teaching and learning. Beverly felt that to build a strong instructional program, teachers needed time and opportunities to visit other teachers' classrooms and observe their instructional practices. She also stated that teachers needed to establish a broad understanding of curriculum to build a strong instructional program. Beverly noted that a key component in building a strong instructional program was building relationships.

Beverly also was the only principal who discussed how she addressed teachers that she did not feel demonstrated cultural competence.

> I focus on feedback and modeling.. making them aware of the goal of the entire instructional problem. We went into classrooms and observed reading. We saw students tracing word by word. If you are not aware that language affects students, disabilities affect students, culture affects them…and if you, as the

teacher, are not aware, then you won't be able to impact their learning. (Abigail, Interview 3)

She made cultural competence a priority with her resource teachers. She felt that if she did not make cultural competence an explicit instructional focus, resource teachers (RTs) would not do it.

> With my RTs, it depends on content…working with staff on cultural competence. We talked today about the shift from "chosen children" and Geometry. We use decision trees and criteria. We must immerse them in it—we video-taped classes that show discourse and success. It's a matter of meshing exposure, leadership and expectation. (Beverly, Interview 3)

> Beverly was the only principal who specifically referenced her goal of inclusion

when she discussed teaching and learning.

> Our special education department is outstanding. I believe that is one of the hallmarks of our school. It is about the need for dissecting the IEP's-- it's about making sure your goals match your program and that your program has a continuum. We saw the impact of small class sizes for our special education class. We have made sure kids are included when it is appropriate for them. We base our decisions on data. Our end goal is to make sure they have the ability…achieve maximum potential. (Beverly, Interview 3)

> Abigail also focused on creating an environment where teachers are focused on

teaching and learning. Although the principals agreed on the importance of data, Abigail

was the only respondent that linked effective teaching and learning with her data focus.

> Because of my special ed background, we always look at data-- it drives your instruction and student goals. We need to do that for ALL kids. We have a process with a form…teachers then list information and support before we decide on next steps. What are they doing with current interventions and instruction? It is changing their instruction, because they know their kids. That's the bottom line. I think the main thing is the teachers know their kids, and I know their kids. They are differentiating more. (Abigail, Interview 3)

Structures

All three principals had the following structures in place: data analysis meetings,

monitoring tools, instruction monitoring, use of student voice, and professional

development. In addition, all principals had an instructional leadership team that focused on teaching and learning, not management issues.

Data analysis meetings. All three principals created structures to address inequity at their schools. These mechanisms enabled their teams to discuss and analyze relevant data. The principals called their teams by different names, but all teams focused on examining data disaggregated by race to analyze formative and summative data. Clyde developed an "enhanced data team;" Beverly's group was an "access and equity team;" and Abigail's assembly had grade level team data chats with "student staffing meetings."

Clyde's enhanced data team met monthly, and included his resource teachers for ESOL and Special Education, staff development teacher, assistant principals, and an English teacher who works with ESOL students for the HSA. In addition, his leadership team discussed data each week.

> We still maintain an enhanced data team, because we're always going to be that close to making the AMO. We really do drill down. We drill down to individual kids. We know their age, their mother's maiden name, and their shoe size. We have the second highest FARMS rate, and the eighth highest SAT scores out of the 24 high schools. When people ask why we do so well, I tell people it's because I'm so actively involved. Many of our minority students and our kids in special education do not achieve well on the tests. So that's where we focus our efforts. The enhanced data team measures the progress of individual students in achieving success on the English and math portion of the HSAs, which is what we are judged [on] for AYP. We've been very successful in getting our students to take HSAs again, to help our school get a higher score. We are 68% FARMS, we are 78% minority status, and we make AYP; where 12 other high schools didn't. We look [at] performance through subgroups. The structure works. The structure is laid out and we know what the goal is going to be. We meet regularly, and that's key. (Clyde, Interview 1)

Clyde stated that, in addition to the enhanced data team, he created a data sub-committee when the SAT scores for African-American students dropped 120 points.

We created a committee when we lost 120 points, but we had more students taking the SAT. You may do better on ACT. We may not get credit for that we want to do…what's best for kids. When I indicated three years ago that we had about twelve Black students in the entire school that had a 3.0 or better, and that's exactly the way I said it…I shared this with the entire faculty at one time. They took a lot of things on themselves at one time, and we guided them. They took the bulls by the horn, and our African American scores on the SAT went up by 140 points. I look at SAT and HSA. Now, we're 9th or 10th on SAT scores each year. It's not a fluke; we're higher than some of the fancy schools. (Clyde, Interview 1)

Clyde explained that, due to their practice of building relationships with students, they are able to get students to re-take the HSAs.

We've been very successful in getting our students to take HSAs again, to help our school get a higher score. The enhanced data team measures the progress of individual students in achieving success on the English and math portion of the HSAs, which is what we are judged for AYP. We watch those kids (Clyde, Interview 2).

Beverly's school had an access and equity team that met monthly. It included all her resource teachers, her assistant principals, and her data assistant. Her leadership team discussed data each week, and used decision trees as a structure. I will discuss this structure in the monitoring instruction section. Beverly felt strongly that as the leader she needed to do the groundwork on the data before the meetings, so she was never surprised.

Everything we do is based on data…Everything. I think that is important with consistency. We can have all the data in the world. If we're not willing to do something about it, it's just numbers on a piece of paper. It's creating so they see the benefit of the meetings…looking at the content, the subgroups, and look through different lenses, and being able to identify what each group needs. We're consistent with using the decision trees…using the same assessments and adhering to assessment timelines. And those are some things that were not in place before, but when you look at the numbers, the numbers don't lie. Know what your numbers are as you unpack data for staff. I can't say how important that is to know the numbers before you go in. It took staff a while...and understanding how to get there and how to use the monitoring tool, and everyone being able to use it the same way. Our data team is key in this, and they have to share the philosophy of the principal. That relationship is molded, and you have to have the same expectations. (Beverly, Interview 2)

Abigail's school had "kid talk data chats" with teams that met weekly, and the leadership

team discussed whole school data at data chats monthly. She stated that due to her special

education background, she was always referencing data to drive their instruction and

student goals.

> Data chats are our biggest way of monitoring. Big stacks of data didn't mean anything, so I learned how to look at that data with staff. We did these meetings…I called them "student staffing meetings." Every specialist was there to meet with the classroom teacher, and we would talk about each and every child. I like to have all the data right in front of me. Data is most important. We do this through our data chats. We need to do that for ALL kids. We do data chats so I can talk about attendance, tardies, whether kids are making improvement, and which interventions are working. So, I was trying to teach the teachers. We look at all kinds of data to build the picture of the whole child. We look at everything. How do you know what the issues are? Data chats have helped as a structure, as we were at 60th in Math and Reading county scores and we are now at 90% Math and 94% Reading. Last year we had 100% proficiency and fifth grade and reading before they went to middle school. We talk about our kids and what do we need to do to help them be successful. Sometimes race plays a part in that. A lot comes out during this discussion. (Abigail, Interview 2)

Abigail discussed some of the lessons the group had learned from the student staffing

meetings. She indicated that "the other things that came out of the meetings was that

teachers didn't know how to do small group instruction." Abigail then used her

professional development structures to support her teachers. She felt that recognizing

problems earlier positively impacted the quality of instruction. She also made the shift to

putting her strongest teachers with her neediest students.

The consistent use of data meetings became a structure that affected learning

opportunities for students in all of their schools. All the principals felt these meetings led

to opportunities to discuss race and instructional inequities at their schools. Their

structured data analysis plans resulted in discussions with staff about race and how racial

and ethnic diversity impacted the children in their schools.

Monitoring tool. All three principals created monitoring tools to track student data at their schools. These tools became a part of the structure used in the data analysis and leadership team meetings. This structure allowed teachers to use the same data disaggregated by race. All schools used formative scores, summative scores, course grades by departments and grade level, and the district predictor model data. Each school analyzed across classes, teachers, and individual students. Beverly's school went a step further. Her teachers kept grade books by subgroups and analyzed math assessments in their department meetings.

> Beverly expressed her strong feelings about the need for a monitoring tool:
>
> Our data monitoring tool lets us see in it [a] child's entire educational background in all areas. Everything has to be concrete in data. What do the numbers say? What does the child need? We also include suspension, ineligibility and the predictor model. Everyone is speaking that language now. That has been a shift. The RTs bring their data to the departments. I think if you set clear expectations of the use of the data…It took staff a while…and understanding how to get there and how to use the monitoring tool, and everyone being able to use it the same way. Data frames every conversation here. The teachers are really asking questions about how we can change the monitoring tool. As they use the data, it comes up with more questions. The impact of using our data monitoring tool has been critical. Teachers had to look through the lens of reflection to determine how they might change their practice. You have to be consistent with your expectations about using the data. I can't say how important it is to have a monitoring tool. (Beverly, Interview 1)

Although it took time for each school to develop a monitoring tool that worked for their students, each principal commented on the benefit of using the monitoring tool was its positive impact on instruction. The focus on data changed how teachers utilized data, which changed learning opportunities.

Monitoring instruction. All three principals discussed the structures they had established to monitor instruction across grade levels and departments. Each participant created a calendar for structured observations for evaluation and non-evaluation years. In

101

addition, all of them developed a teacher monitoring plan, since none of their schools had

prior plans. The secondary principals met with resource teachers to discuss formal and

informal observations. Abigail observed that "teachers want to hear the feedback to

improve their practice." Although all three principals were required to use the same

district professional growth system procedures, only Clyde referenced it, "The

professional growth system works—we provide support for teachers."

Only Beverly discussed using a classroom instructional round strategy structure to

observe instruction for all departments in her school.

> We did instructional rounds in Math B. The structures were amazing…different
> stations, all with students who were basic and who were engaged in the learning. I
> think the impact came with teachers seeing the reading classes. It's my job as a
> leader to find time for teachers to observe other teachers' instruction. (Beverly,
> Interview 3)

Although Clyde and Beverly described focusing first on their instructional

programs, Abigail described steps she took during her first two years before focusing on

the instructional program.

> I was given two charges--fix the discipline problem and fix the low test scores. I
> had to come in and evaluate what is needed. I didn't change a whole lot the first
> year, except things that absolutely had to be changed. I was the only administrator
> the first year--no assistant principal. The first thing we did was a discipline plan
> and a homework plan. Every group was involved: teachers, students, and parents.
> Some of them just really didn't understand how to do discipline, and that was one
> of my main charges when I came here. I did notice my African-American children
> were sent up here more than anybody else. I started collecting data about
> referrals--Who is being referred? Males? African-Americans? We are 53%
> African-American. I looked at the data by neighborhood, by teacher, by gender,
> and by grade level. I did home visits and tried to establish the feeling that we are
> all in this together. We created structures—a committee to look at the problem to
> create new discipline policy; a problem solving sheet to be completed by teachers
> before referring kids--and we changed recess to individual grade recess. (Abigail,
> Interview 1)

Only Clyde described utilizing outside feedback with staff about their

instructional program.

> The middle states program review came, and they said there were two strengths: diversity and the principal. That would be great for me if I wanted to be the chief school performance whatever. I talked to staff and told them that is not what we wanted to hear. What we wanted to hear [was that] instruction was a strength--the level of questionings, the quality of assignments, stimulating classes, challenging lessons from teachers--that's what we want to hear. The reviewer shared that they didn't think the math department like kids. So, I met with the whole math department and told them what they said, and they just sat there. We talked about what that meant and what changes they might want to make. (Clyde, Interview 1)

Clyde admitted that the feedback was difficult for teachers to hear, and so he supported

them as he also directed them to create plans for improvement. Clyde's departments

created plans that addressed the lack of depth in their instructional program. Clyde felt

that those plans, in addition to the data structures, positively impacted instruction for all

students.

While Clyde and Abigail took a more directive approach with decisions about

changes for the instructional program, Beverly described the journey she took guiding the

leadership team through analyzing their instructional program.

> We had to look at the how and the why around our framework. This was the first time we started talking about the nuts and bolts of the instructional program. It used to be the same teachers, same classes, and same schedule year after year. After my first year as a principal, observing all of this it was a matter of looking at what works best. There was movement around certification and highly qualified teachers. Thinking about the structure and how best to serve the community and the program in terms of leadership…who was equipped and adept at leading a group of teachers and facilitating dialogue with parents, being a champion for the child. Also, restructuring the offerings of courses for different groups of students. We had to recognize that GT can look a different way. It was more than a paradigm shift; it was restructuring and re-focusing staff on what a full comprehensive middle school program looks like to meet the needs of each child, not to meet the needs of staff. So it was staffing, course offerings, leadership, role of the leader, and not being afraid to look within to see who we really were deep down…to peel back the layers to see what it really looks like. (Beverly, Interview 1)

103

Both Beverly and Abigail discussed how teachers had embraced the data monitoring tool and taken more ownership of the tool beyond the meetings, which positively impacted instruction. Abigail's teachers had created a list of changes for the monitoring tool, so it would grow and change as they utilized the data and came up with new questions. Some of Beverly's teachers had created decision tress to guide course placement. Beverly explained that her teachers created a decision tree for high school credit courses, and the math department created a decision tree for all courses.

> My math department made a decision tree, and looked up what is needed for each individual math level, it wasn't earth shattering, but it was information they needed to come to on their own.. We discussed the criteria together. It is established and inclusive for all students, and the beautiful thing is it doesn't exclude; it does include all students. That is the part I found most fascinating. It helps them to program and instruct. It also helps the student to gain access and have the same expectations and allow the teacher to not be able to use extra factors against a student. (Beverly, Interview 2)

Her school's use of the decision trees addressed the inequity that had existed before the employment of the trees; since prior to their use, students had been excluded from higher-level courses.

Student voice. Beverly and Clyde were the only principals who sought to learn from listening to students' perspectives. At the time of our interview, Beverly had just started using this approach the previous year. She explained that she directed teachers to view obstacles through student eyes, to develop solutions to instructional issues.

> For our December staff meeting, we shared through student voice; and students spoke about classes on the tape. The students like the teachers to give feedback, and the work needs to be challenging. The focus group was students who had all been suspended at least one time. We saw video clips about engagement at our own 6th grade—we can do this here. To hear from kids about what they need is key. We will continue this. (Beverly, Interview 3)

Beverly observed that hearing from students was a powerful way to guide teachers to reflect on their instruction. She also encouraged her teachers to ask students questions and ask for their feedback as a part of regular instruction.

Clyde created two structures for this incorporating student voices: an in school in-service for teachers and a mentoring program. Clyde started having weekly professional development time, not staff meetings. He also created time in the school's schedule for teams of teachers to plan. Clyde created a structure the school called ISIS: in school in-service.

> We talk to kids and students conduct this time with teachers now and talk to teachers about what they see and then we can hear the student voices. This is something we do all day-- one day each month. When I got here, the survey said 42% of the kids wanted to go to school here. Now we're in the 90s. It's about respect…and we listen to the kids. (Clyde, Interview 3)

Clyde also was the only principal that created a mentoring program for African-American and Hispanic students. Since the program grew large enough, they had seniors mentor other students. The program was designed for 60 total students, and within a year, it grew to over 200 students.

> We established a "30/30 program." We identified 30 African-American kids and 30 Hispanic kids, who were at the lowest level of achievement but should've been achieving at a much higher level…to the 3.3/3.5 range, and we hooked each of those kids up with a mentor. We provide suggestions of what those mentors should be doing on a regular basis…a monthly guideline including course selections for the following year, thinking about colleges, thinking about SAT/ACT…what is your best test taking style, strongly recommend they take AP/IB classes. (Clyde, Interview 2)

Although Abigail talked about looking at issues the students faced at her school, she did not describe using student voice in the solutions.

Professional development. All three principals had put professional development structures in place for their teachers. Although budget cuts had impacted each school, the

principals each found a way to keep the structure working for staff. Clyde and Abigail turned their staff meetings into professional development time, and Beverly utilized common team planning time. All three principals had staff development teachers in their buildings that also supported their focus on race, instruction, and data analysis. Abigail stated, "We've done a lot of training for teachers and collecting data. We have evolved and only collect the data that is pertinent for making good instructional decisions for students."

In addition, Clyde worked with all teachers new to his building as a type of orientation. Again, he used student voices as he created a video from the students' perspectives about what makes a good teacher at their school. Clyde stated, "I tell them everything is individual attention." Clyde also explained that he felt this time with new teachers set the stage for his expectations and the school's focus on improving instruction for Hispanic and African-American students. He discussed that he showed the clip from *Primary Colors,* which showed a student receiving an attendance certificate, not a diploma, to highlight that students are there at his school to graduate.

Beverly and Abigail explained that they accessed professional development support from the district equity team. Clyde did not use this support for his school. Beverly stated that after analyzing their school's suspension data, they followed up with a workshop that focused on understanding African-American males. Abigail noted that she tried to focus on feelings first, because she felt "your own personal ideals are going to drive your actions, and how you feel about other people."

Only Abigail described creating additional professional development structures, such as book clubs and movie clubs, that focused on race and equity. She explained that

these opportunities encouraged staff sharing their personal experiences with each other.

Abigail felt she needed to be the primary teacher developer, "I brought that content back

to my staff, as a principal I felt like it was my responsibility to lead this for my staff".

> We talked about the books, *Why are all of the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?* and *Race in America,* and others…just getting people to understand some of the things we do that we don't know we do (unconscious behaviors). I used *Listen up teacher you're making a difference*! at staff meetings (like our warm-up). I read part of this to bring attention…there were kids in the book, and it's all students from a student perspective. We had a book club and…also movies. There were probably about 20 of us that meet every Tuesday. We had some very powerful conversations. We had African-American staff who talked about what it felt like to go into a store, and the perceptions. We talked about African-American staff who felt White and what that meant. We also talked about the kids in our conversations. We always tied this back to how we interacted with our kids and how did we communicate with them? Were we treating kids differently? (Abigail, Interview 3)

Abigail used the time to discuss the concepts of bias and colorblindness with her staff.

> I would ask the teacher to think about this, "If this was your child how would you feel about the way you are treating them?" Sometimes teachers don't understand how their bias is impacting a child. That was one thing that came out from our discussions…is the number of people who said they had bias or were colorblind. (Abigail, Interview 3)

> Abigail also was the only principal who indicated she had a professional

development plan for herself as the principal. Again, she used the book club format for

the leadership team to discuss the book *Mindset*.

> This book club focuses on expectations of the child. Where they come from…does that make a difference? Is that something you're concerned about? Does that impact how you teach the child? At the first group, I gave a little quiz— "Do teachers expectations affect student performance?" Some of the responses were "Yes," "Absolutely, especially for African-American students."We had a really great discussion. We are coming up with "look fors" to use what we are learning to see what teachers are doing to promote a growth mindset to apply our learning from the book. Another principal and I are going to have our LTs get together and compare and talk with each other. (Abigail, Interview 3)

Finally, only Abigail's school studied institutionalized racism. Abigail stated that she followed the overview used at the quarterly administrative and supervisory meetings. She felt it was a topic that had fallen off the radar, and they needed to revisit it with their new staff.

Equity Focus

All participants described an equity focus, as they discussed their practices and structures. Clyde noted he did not see obstacles, only opportunities.

> Many of our minority students and our kids in special education do not achieve well on the tests. So, that's where we focus our efforts. We don't have enough African-American teachers. The county doesn't have enough. I have phenomenal staff of every color, who are just as involved with minority students, no matter what color they are. I had to make changes the fourth week of school for teaching assignments. You don't give them what they need or what they deserve, then I will follow-up. (Clyde, Interview 2)

Beverly commented that the staff needed to address a lack of a sense of urgency about the work they needed to do for African-American and Hispanic students in her school.

> I'd say the obstacle would be everyone not always feeling that sense of urgency. Fair is fair, and schools is fair here—you have the best shot here for success. We came full circle when we exited school improvement, because we showed; regardless of disability, race, or demographics income; you can succeed. (Beverly, Interview 2)

Abigail's goal was to provide education that enabled each child to attend college, and she felt preparation for that started in her elementary school.

> This is the only opportunity some of these kids will ever have. I want to work to reach those kids that might get shoved aside somewhere else. The parents are counting on us to do what's best for their kids. This is the focus for the teachers to understand…for some of the kids, we are all they have right now. I want all of these kids to go to college. I share with kids that we will find a way to help them get there if finances are an issue. We are the only shot some of these kids have-- so we have to give them whatever we can give. If you ask anybody here, they will say that I believe in the kids, and I want the kids to know that I believe in them, 100 percent. (Abigail, Interview 2)

All of the principals felt their school was the best place for African American and Hispanic students since they focused on race and on specific student needs, so the students would not be lost in the system in their schools. Their equity focus was clear.

Focus on race and culture. The three principals showed their awareness of race in different ways and discussed race with different degrees of depth. Clyde referenced analyzing data disaggregated by race when grade point averages and SAT scores for African-Americans were much lower than their White peers. He offered two examples:

> I'm a real straight forward person. I can try to fluff this up, but I don't. When our African-American males were not performing well, that is exactly the way I addressed it. I shared this with the entire faculty at one time. I indicated three years ago that we had about twelve Black [students] in the entire school that had a 3.0 or better…and that's exactly the way I said it…teachers were surprised and stepped up to help …A lot of people in particular are African-American staff. (Clyde, Interview 1)

> Our scores went down 120 points for African American students a few years ago. The staff took a lot of things on themselves at one time, and we guided them. They took the bulls by the horn, and our African-American scores on the SAT went up by 140 points (Clyde, Interview 2).

Clyde demonstrated that he was comfortable discussing race with his teachers and leadership team. He felt his school had moved to a place where discussions focused on data and race were the norm.

> We don't think about race (as an outlier) as much as other schools-- we deal with it every day. I understand the need, because there are places where kids aren't being treated fairly, but there are so many minorities here. We are 78% minority. We are diversity high school. You are in the wrong place, if you don't want to teach Black and Brown students. (Clyde, Interview 2)

Clyde noted that he sought student's perspectives. He planned focus groups for Hispanic and African-American students. "Next year, I am to focus on asking students of color, 'Do you ever feel racism at school?'" Although Clyde showed racial awareness in

different ways, he did not discuss his own racial identity or cultural identity as a White

male.

Like Clyde, Beverly also showed her racial awareness through analyzing data

disaggregated by race. She focused on making teacher leaders comfortable with

discussing race as a factor.

> We also looked at how comfortable leaders are at manipulating the data and
> having conversations about the data. You need to know how to have
> conversations these were courageous conversations and how to have these
> conversations with teachers without them being defensive…see you can move
> people along. (Beverly, Interview 2)

Beverly described her efforts to bring racial awareness to teachers' consciousness. Unlike

Clyde and Abigail, Beverly also focused on racial and cultural awareness from a student

perspective.

> For a kid, it helps them see themselves outside of whatever box society has put
> them in; and being a history teacher previously, I have seen there are lots of boxes
> for lots of people. Lots of barriers or walls have been built around particular
> groups in any given one point in time that you often read about those who have
> been able to break them down. I'm really glad we looked at kids through the lens
> of educational needs. It wasn't that this group of students all get treated a certain
> way because of their race. In terms of cultural awareness of students, they have to
> understand the world's perception of them and how then people are going to
> impose stereotypes…impose expectations whether high or low and how are they
> going to themselves either succeed, submit, concede, or really dispel those kinds
> of myths or stereotypes about who they are as a person or people. (Beverly,
> Interview 1)

Unlike Clyde, Beverly specifically commented on her own racial identity.

> I think in regards to understanding the racial and cultural concepts of any
> particular group is that you have to recognize the nuances…the importance of
> background and history on a particular culture, but also with that in mind --
> stepping outside and being able to think and understand others through the
> lens…beyond your lens… It's not an matter of only focusing on one group or only
> your own perspective, it's how does your perspective infuse with another and how
> does that impact your sense of being and who you are. In being an African-
> American female who folks didn't think should like math, I wear that on my
> sleeve. You have to figure this out in your head, and you may be the only person

in a particular class. That framed where I went in life, and that teacher may not…no I know he didn't recognize the impact of that at the time…that small part of my education framed so much of what I did later on in life. It just shows you the impact. (Beverly, Interview 1)

Beverly explained that her upbringing had deepened her understanding of her own cultural identity. She explained:

> I believe my culture plays a huge role in understanding and moving staff and parents. The stereotypes I deal with based on my culture and in what is expected of me within my culture, that it took me to see another person who was good in math and for me to want to emulate that particular teacher…Seeing my education and my impact as an African-American female, I see myself as being representative of the different groups at any given moment in time. It's based on who I am, and how my mom in particular…that's cultural. They say they raise daughters and protect sons. There were no time for sob stories-- it was every day you have to tow the line. So, when I came in, and that was my perspective…you have to tow the line…not everyone felt that way, but that's what my perspective was based on. Generationally, my family was very educated, and that may be different too. It is based on where I grew up-- it was very Black and White, literally. It was not much diversity at all, and there was never a point in time when there were lower expectations for me. Now, I knew there may not be many African-Americans of my classes at the time. I think I was naïve or had blinders on, to as a child does not recognize, it could've been my age, to see a level of de facto segregation. (Beverly, Interview 2)

Beverly felt that discussing race and culture had resulted in greater teacher reflection. She explained that teachers "began to see this may be the first African-American male academically successful in a family, and they could provide and support that success."

Like Beverly, Abigail also referenced her upbringing. She felt her upbringing affected her openness to looking beyond her own perspective.

> Growing up, I had a sister with cerebral palsy; and just growing up with a sibling with a disability, I was very sensitive to the way people feel. My sister was always everywhere we went. For example, when we went to the cafeteria, people would ask me what she would like to eat, and not talk to her. As kids, we just learned those things. So early on, I learned about differences in people. If I wasn't an open-minded person, I don't think I could gain the trust of my community, my staff. (Abigail, Interview 1)

Abigail commented on how her own cultural awareness had grown throughout her life.

111

With all the different cultural experiences I've had, it helps me understand everything. People don't need to explain—Asians may do this, etc. I have the empathy and patience to understand this may be cultural. With the work we did with [the equity team], I had some "aha" moments. I'm in love with that, because we're so diverse here. I'm married to a Jewish guy, and converted to Judaism. I learned culturally what it felt like to be a religious minority. (Abigail, Interview 2)

Abigail and Beverly were the only principals that focused on students and development an understanding the students' cultures. Abigail explained her strong feelings about cultural sensitivity, "Kids might be in trouble all the time because I wouldn't understand cultural aspects. For example, a teacher saying the student didn't look at her when she was talking to him. Well, I would ask, "[H]ave you considered that might be cultural?"

I've learned a lot about the Black culture. My quest was to ensure that we got the kind of teaching that the students needed, and supported what my staff needed to do that. We are only 7% White at the school, and I want the minority parents to understand that I am there for their kids. I felt like I learned a lot about diversity in that experience. I was the first White principal here after fifteen years of having a Black male principal. There were a lot of challenges here, and I remember my first NAACP meeting with my parent rep. I was not uncomfortable at all there were sixteen Black parents present. At the end, I talked with the two parents as we left the meeting and asked them how I did. They shared they didn't care what color I was. They shared [what] they wanted was a good principal to step in and take care of their kids. They wanted me to address behavior issues and get the school back on track academically. I work in a school that is 93% minority. I really feel if I didn't have the kind of background and experiences, I wouldn't be able to understand how to work with people. I think that is very important, that you have some kind of knowledge about what you are doing in order to really push the agenda that the school system wants. So, I think it helped me. (Abigail, Interview 2)

Abigail was the only principal who specifically developed professional development activities to enhance teachers' cultural awareness. She explained, "I started to see changing behavior by the students, because they were being treated with respect. Our community knew their children would be safe and be loved and not have racism entered

into it also." At the time of our interview, recent budget cuts had impacted the time

Abigail was able to provide for teachers to engage in professional development activities

and discussions about race. She commented, "We need time to really delve into it race.

You have to want to do it and come to the table and talk openly. I can't force them."

Abigail specifically talked about being a White woman, "I've had some

uncomfortable experiences, but you can hide that…being White." She explained that

although she understands the concept of White privilege, she had learned from people of

other races in ways that she felt had raised her consciousness. Abigail was the only

principal to discuss White privilege as it pertained to her or her staff.

> That particular White teacher would be surprised when the teacher would share
> their experience as an African-American woman going into a store. It was an
> awareness… people don't always understand where other people are coming from.
> I try to learn from my staff. My African-American assistant principal might share
> from her own experiences and how that impacts in dealing with parents. (Abigail,
> Interview 2)

Abigail explained, "I am now divorced and [have been] dating a guy who is African-

American for the past thirteen years." Her learning experiences and "aha" moments cause

her to look at her experiences differently. She commented, "I wanted people to

understand this wasn't because my boyfriend was Black…that this was what was best for

kids." She also explained that she openly discussed race with her assistant principal and

that "having a Black assistant principal helps me, she brings a different perspective."

Awareness of racism. The principals talked about racism in a different ways.

Clyde stated that he did not tolerate racism or discrimination towards students, and he

made that policy crystal clear to staff and students.

> If racism occurs, then we deal with it; but you don't stay long if you are racist or
> don't come at all—we're less than 12% White. If it happened, I'd deal with it. I
> don't put up with that. I put the data on the table. We are it for these kids, and I'll

going to make sure we do it right, and if we don't then we fix it. (Clyde, Interview 2)

Beverly described a personal story about racism that she had shared with staff to increase their consciousness of how words and actions can categorize students. Through the story, she encouraged teachers to get to know each child personally.

> When I went to college, that was my first real experience with racism and understanding what I had been through. I was walking across campus, and there was a comment made; and I wondered how did they get that from me? I had to look outside myself, and say, "That's how the world sees me?" (Beverly, Interview 1)

Like Beverly, Abigail also believed it important that staff reflect on how their actions impacted students.

> We are role models for these kids, and if kids see us disrespecting kids…if a Black child feels like I am disrespecting them based on their skin color, they may think (because they've seen racism outside of school also) that's why that child is in trouble. I wasn't nervous at all of talking about this. (Abigail, Interview 2)

Abigail addressed issues of possible racism with staff. She commented, "It's easy to get complacent and deny there's racism in your building. I'd like to say it's not here, but I can't. Abigail was also the only principal who illustrated an example of addressing racism with a teacher who only sent Black children to the office for discipline referrals. She noted, "We have a high minority rate, but it was always the same kids." This focus allowed her to talk about race beyond the professional development settings. Abigail was also the only principal who made addressing racism a specific focus for her school.

> When you go to other areas, sometimes you can forget that there is still racism…that those things are still out there. A lot of people have blinders on and think because we have a Black president, there is no racism. It's still there. It's part of our culture. (Abigail, Interview 3)

114

In addition, Abigail was the only principal to talk specifically about institutionalized racism and White privilege with her staff. She noted that she needed to revisit both with her new staff.

> We talked about this during our structured training. I'm not sure we use those terms now, however. We started talking about institutionalized racism with the book we are looking at now. We talk about being racist, what that means, and our own practice, and how that affects our kids lives. I think we'll get into that again during the book club. We did talk about White privilege during our structured training. With the work we did with [the equity team], I had some "aha" moments. I sat through a seminar with a woman who is Muslim…and I may have talked about this before…I didn't realize that Muslim men really can't touch another woman…a single woman. It wasn't that they didn't want to shake my hand. I think that's where a lot of our unfortunate…our racism comes from…whether it is Blacks, gay people, Jewish people-- people don't understand. (Abigail, Interview 2)

After the training, she felt that she "started to see changing behavior by the students, because they were being treated with respect".

Abigail was also the only principal who discussed race and racism with her community. She felt that "some parents may not be the same color as me, but we identify with each other, because we both want their kids to be successful. Our community knew their children would be safe and be loved and not have racism entered into it also."

Leadership

All three principals engaged in four primary leadership practices---shared leadership, developing vision, expectations, and trust--to address inequity in their schools. Each area is described in this section.

Shared leadership. Clyde focused on creating pride in the school and on also on hiring the right people to teach at the school.

> I think my leadership style has enabled them to be what they want to be. I treat my staff as adults. I don't have to run the show—I make suggestions. I can be in the background now—I guess I have empowered the people. I hire them, train

them, support them, and now I can step back. It's because of what I initiate…what I put into place. Calm leadership comforts the staff. (Clyde, Interview 3)

Beverly focused on building the capacity of her teacher leaders, and ensuring that everyone had a role in monitoring.

> As the leader, you have to monitor everything; but there has to be a process in place for your team. But it can't just be the leader. In terms of the monitoring, teachers had to be taught how to use the tool. We've asked teachers, "What do you want to see? What would make this more clear cut for you? What do you need to see? What training do you need?" We also looked at how comfortable leaders are and manipulating the data and having conversations about the data. We collaborate and always try to find other ways to better our data analysis. It is invigorating for us, not all leaders feel this way. (Beverly, Interview 2)

Abigail agreed with Beverly and created a collaborative focus to prioritize building capacity for her leadership team to become comfortable analyzing data. "We are coming up with 'look fors' to use what we are learning to see what teachers are doing to promote a growth mindset to apply our learning from the book."

Trust. All three principals referenced trust as a key part of their leadership styles. Clyde gave the most detailed explanation of the role of trust in his approach to leadership with his community, staff, and students.

> I keep no secrets from my community. My community knows me, trusts me, and loves me. I'm not bragging-- it's about respect. I tell them when scores are down, scores are up…I tell everyone everything all the time. The superintendent has shared with me [that] we are one of the two most requested schools in the county that people want to transfer into. I trust my staff. My success is about my knowledge of people, and how I treat people. I hire the right people. I'm honest with staff. I am sincere. It's how I want to be treated. It's about treating people right. They want to work hard—it motivates the staff. I go out of my way to help people. I move around rules, and focus on people. The respect has been developed with our students. I show them I care. We collect money, and get kid's picture taken for the yearbook for seniors.   With the new mentoring program, we had 50 staff volunteer for 30 kids. The trust is there. I create an environment where it's okay to make mistakes. This has to do with trust. (Clyde, Interview 3)

Clyde concluded, "All that splashes over. We take care of each other."

Beverly linked trust with solid relationships and respect. She explained, "If the relationship is not built on respect, trust, understanding, and some relativity to what's going on in the child's life, there is a disconnect. At the end of the day, it's about respect." She provided further clarity on her philosophy:

> Always be willing to take the hit, and come back the next day, and keep it moving. It is important for staff to see that resilient part of you as a leader. I tell teachers to trust and give the parent issues to me. You have to understand why people are acting the way they're acting and feeling the way they are feeling. It is important for staff to know they can come to me, cry with me, and they know I understand. We have a very low turnover rate from staff. (Beverly, Interview 2)

Abigail felt that she built trust in the surrounding community through her commitment to taking care of each child.

> Parents have entrusted their children to me, and we need to take care of their safety and their education. So, if I go into a classroom and see poor teaching it makes me nauseous. Parents have entrusted their children to me and we need to take care of their safety and their education (Abigail, Interview 2).

She explained, "If I wasn't an open-minded person I don't think I could gain the trust of my community, my staff".

Vision. All of the principals had a clear vision of the goals they wanted their staff to achieve. Clyde explained his vision for the school, "[W]e're going to be successful with every child. We may not reach that goal, but we're sure going to try." Beverly's vision for her school was, "folks care about kids. We need to move from crippling them…to empowering them. We have background knowledge, but right now, we need to meet that child; and where can, we move him or her. Feeling that urgency to help our students." Abigail's vision for her school was "to ensure that my kids leave and go to middle school with their tools in the academic tool belt that we've given them. Our goal is beyond test scores. I want to stress that we need to build well-rounded students."

Expectations. Clyde's expectations focused on safety, instructional data, and teaching and learning. He stated that safety should be a given in any school, "My priority is safety in this building. Our safe school reputation is increasing. Our referrals have gone down and are suspensions have gone down that shows the effectiveness." He expected teachers to use data to get to know their students and to effectively plan for each class. Clyde believed that his staff was clear about his expectations, "My expectation for the staff is that they do their job…teach kids well." He noted that he responded to a teacher's comment that he was "brutally candid" by explaining, "Not me! I'm leading you into fixing your teaching and doing it better. I'm honest for kids. That's my focus."

Beverly held high expectations for teachers to use data and engage in reflection. She explained, "We base our decisions on data and that teachers need to use the lens of reflection to determine how they might change their practice." Abigail focused her expectations on teachers knowing their students.

> First of all, I always tell the teachers that our number one priorities are the kids, our students. Not that I don't pay attention to their needs, but the number one focus is on students, not teachers. My expectation is that teachers are collecting daily data and weekly data on their students. I want them to know their kids. I expect teachers to know their kids inside and out. (Abigail, Interview 1)

Abigail explained further that she was exploring the question, "Do teachers' expectations affect student performance?" Her research had revealed interesting results. "Absolutely…especially for African-American students..." Everyone felt that teachers' expectations do impact students. Students will rise to the occasion when you set high expectations. Teachers formulate negative perceptions and judgments towards their students and it impacts on their teaching, and the effort they put into making change."

118

Abigail expected that by studying the effects of their expectations, teachers could better understand their impact on students.

Summary

Table 5 outlines the study findings with the conditions grouped by each principal.

Table 5: Conditions Principals Utilized to Promote Equity (by principal)

	Abigail (ES)	*Beverly (MS)*	*Clyde (HS)*
Practices	Relationships		
	School culture		
	Promotion of effective teaching and learning		
Structures	Data analysis		
	Monitoring tool		
	Monitoring instruction		
	Use of student voice: NOT EVIDENT	Use of student voice	
	Professional development		
Equity Focus	Focus on race and culture (awareness and identity)		Focus on race and culture (awareness and identity NOT EVIDENT)
	Awareness of racism		
Leadership	Shared leadership		
	Trust		
	Vision		
	Expectations		

The cross-case analysis suggested that the conceptual framework developed through a review of the literature was sufficient to illustrate the structures and practices

utilized by effective leaders to address equity in their schools. The cross-case analysis

demonstrated that the level of the school they led did not affect the actions the principals

took. The data supported the literature about social justice and educational equity, in

regards to the ways the respondents addressed inequities within their school. I will

discuss the findings further in the next chapter.

Chapter 6: Summary

This chapter is organized into the following sections: background, research summary, summary of the findings, discussion of the findings, recommendations for further research, implications for policy and practice, and conclusions. After providing a brief description of the contextual background to the study, I revisit the context of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study the research question, the conceptual framework, and the methods utilized in this inquiry. I then summarize findings presented in chapters 4 and 5, before discussing the data in light of research discussed in chapter 2 and the conceptual framework I developed based on research by Brown et al. (2011) and McNaulty (2011). I conclude by offering recommendations for future research and outlining implications for policy and practice. My final comments offer conclusions to this study.

Background

School leaders and educational researchers across the country have explored a number of possible solutions to the racial achievement gap between African-American and Hispanic students and their White counterparts. Numerous studies document the existence of the achievement gap, and note the need for change in our educational system (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2009; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Singleton & Linton, 2006; Berlak, 2001; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001).

The ratification of the NCLB Act in 2001 made improving achievement levels of racial subgroups a priority for all schools. Ideally, this increased focus will help educators begin to address persistent inequalities in today's public school systems. Research confirms that eliminating educational equity is critical to closing the racial achievement

gap (Viadero, 2006; Lee, 2004; Ogbu, 2003; Berlak, 2001; Jencks & Phillips, 1998). Several researchers have identified social justice as a key educational issue in this effort (McNaulty, 2011; Chisnall, 2010; McKenzie, Christman, & Hernandez, 2008; Kose, 2007; Dantley, 2006; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Skrla & Scheurich, 2001), and this is the foundational concept for educational equity. Other studies have found that school leadership plays a vital role in ensuring educational equity (Darling-Hammond, 2007; Johnson, 2004; McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004; Larbi 2003; Marzano, Waters & McNaulty, 2003; Fullan 2002) into all facets of the school. However, principals have struggled with how to address educational equity within their schools. This study examined the role that principals play in establishing educational equity within their schools.

Research Summary

This section summarizes the context for the study, the research problem, research purpose, research question, the conceptual framework, and the research methods. The researcher sought to design a study that utilized principals as the main unit of analysis.

Context for the study. This study took place in Mapleton School District, a public school system that made equity a system-wide goal. Mapleton School District's renewed emphasis on educational equity for African-American and Hispanic students coincided with the federal mandate of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) to address the achievement gap for students in the aforementioned populations. Mapleton School District's did not establish a clear plan of action for achieving this goal of educational equity, and district leaders rarely monitored efforts to implement the mandate. As a

result, many principals questioned the proper approach to fulfilling the directive, and other simply chose not to comply.

Research problem. Numerous studies document the existence of the achievement gap and call for increased efforts to level the playing field for all students in our educational system (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Skrla, McKenzie & Scheurich, 2009; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Singleton & Linton, 2006; Berlak, 2001; Scheurich & Skrla, 2001). Research has shown that systemic racial educational disparities have developed and lead to unequal opportunities, denied access, inequitable resource allocation, and lowered expectations for African-American and Hispanic students (Singleton, 2008). It was in this context that Mapleton District's superintendent mandated that principals seek ways to enhance equity and excellence in their schools. However, the district did not provide a clear model that principals could use when developing plans to increase educational equity, and principals had little research to direct their actions.

To address this void in the research, I conducted a study of principals whose schools appeared to have equity enhancing environments. This inquiry was informed by existing research, reviewed in chapter 2, which confirms that school leaders play an important role in eliminating disparities among their students. I sought to contribute to district practices and the research on social justice in education by identifying specific ways that principals affect educational equity.

Research purpose and question. This study describes the approaches that participating principals' adopted to promote educational equity within their school and examines how these processes met the overall goal of achieving equal access to high-quality educational services for all children, regardless of their ethnic background and

color. This study focused on those principals who appeared to have made achieving educational equity a priority in their schools. The objective of this study was to answer the research question: How do principals promote educational equity in schools?

Research methods. The experiences of three principals were explored in this multi-case study to determine how they promoted educational equity within their schools. I utilized a multi-case study approach to examine the practices of three principals from three schools a suburban school district: one elementary, one middle, and one high school. Chapter 3 explained the research design and methods employed in this study, and chapter 4 provided a description of the schools, background information for the principals, and a detailed summary of the data collected during this inquiry. The principals were selected using a sampling process described in detail in chapter 3. The principals were interviewed to determine how they had promoted educational equity within their schools.

Conceptual framework. This study described the approaches that participating principals adopted to promote educational equity within their schools. To investigate these practices, I developed a guiding conceptual framework based on the work of Brown et. al. (2011) and McNaulty (2011), researchers who have identified behaviors demonstrated by effective principals that enhance educational equity. Each of these works provided a useful lens through which we can view social justice leadership and efforts to employ educational equity to reduce achievement gaps.

I employed McNaulty's (2011) overview of social justice leadership, and the indicators of social justice he identified in K-12 education, to specify leadership skills frequently found among school administrators who successfully developed into social

justice leaders. The work of Brown et al. (2011) contributed a framework for examining strategies proven effective in closing achievement gaps. Their work focused on principals who confronted and changed discriminatory practices that negatively impacted African-American and Hispanic students.

Figure 2, presented in chapter 2, outlined the conceptual framework I used to guide the study. Principal leadership is the foundation for the framework. The principal sets the direction, manages the instructional program, and organization for the school. As educators work towards the goal of educational equity for all students, they must address the inequities African American and Hispanic students face that exist in their schools. Principals use a number of strategies to mitigate injustice. Such strategies may include creating a sense of purpose and vision that all students are served well, developing inclusive practices that focus on instruction, hiring quality people, creating opportunities for substantive decision-making processes based on instructional (student) data, acting with love, and enhancing trust. The conceptual framework I developed from the work of Brown et al. (2011) and McNaulty (2011) also assumes that principals who act as social justice leaders employ a critical consciousness by enhancing educational equity to reduce and address injustices in education.

Findings of my study revealed complex relationships among elements of this heuristic. My analysis confirmed that principals engaged in multiple practices, created structures, focused on equity and demonstrated leadership for equity in multiple overlapping ways.   Principals would engage in substantive decision making to enhance equity by hiring "quality people". The principals were deliberate in developing an equity

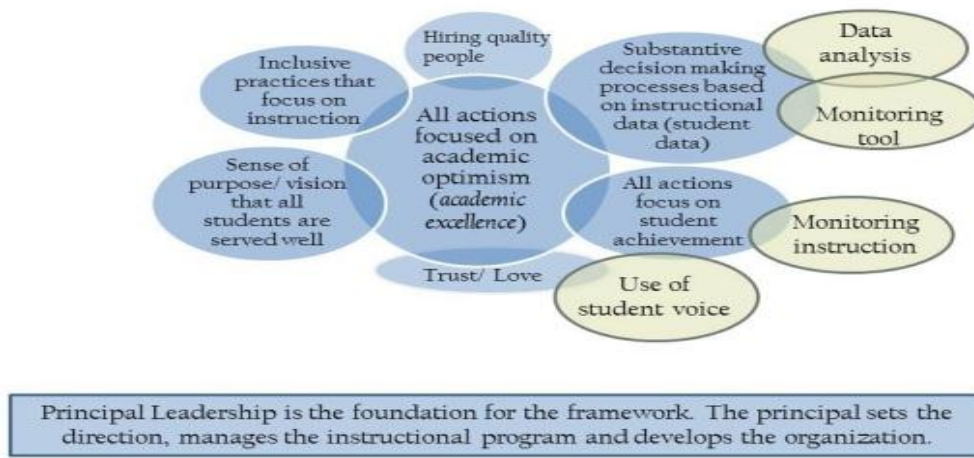focused culture and in promoting effective teaching and learning are centrally important to all elements.

Figure 4.1. *Principal practices linking to conceptual framework*
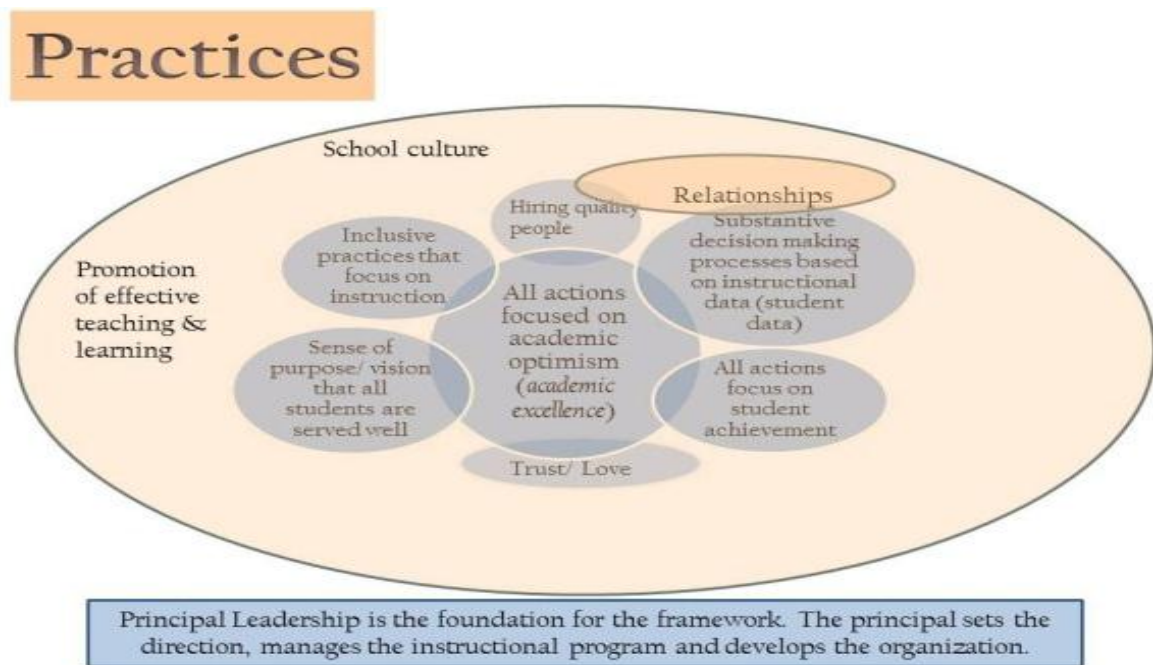
Second, principals deliberately promoted equity enhancing data analysis and created monitoring tools to enhance student achievement. All the principals were also deliberate in creating a culture of trust and "love" by seeking student and/or community input on how their schools improve student achievement.

Figure 4.2. *Principal created structures linking to conceptual framework*
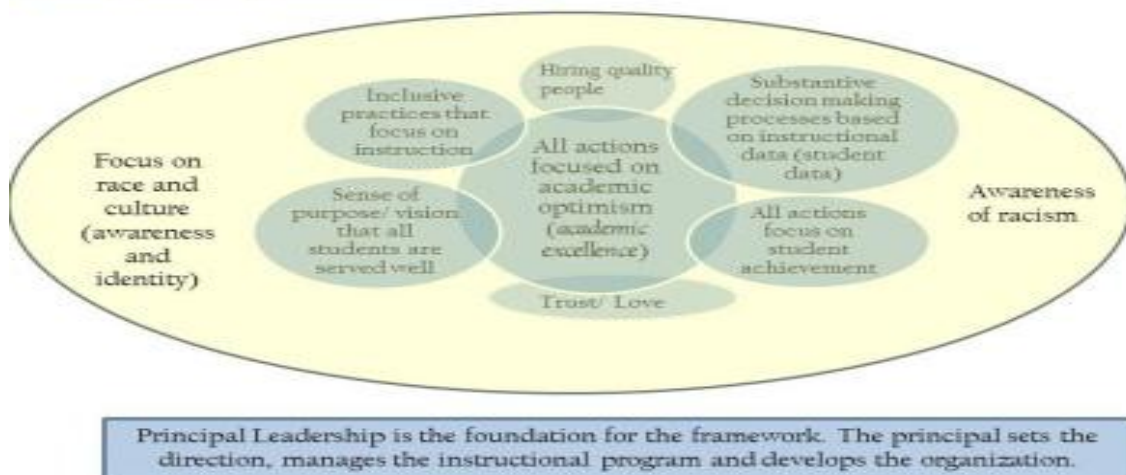
Structures

Principal Leadership is the foundation for the framework. The principal sets the direction, manages the instructional program and develops the organization.

Third, all principals demonstrated a deep awareness of the effects of racism and were relentless in finding ways to create equity focused school cultures.

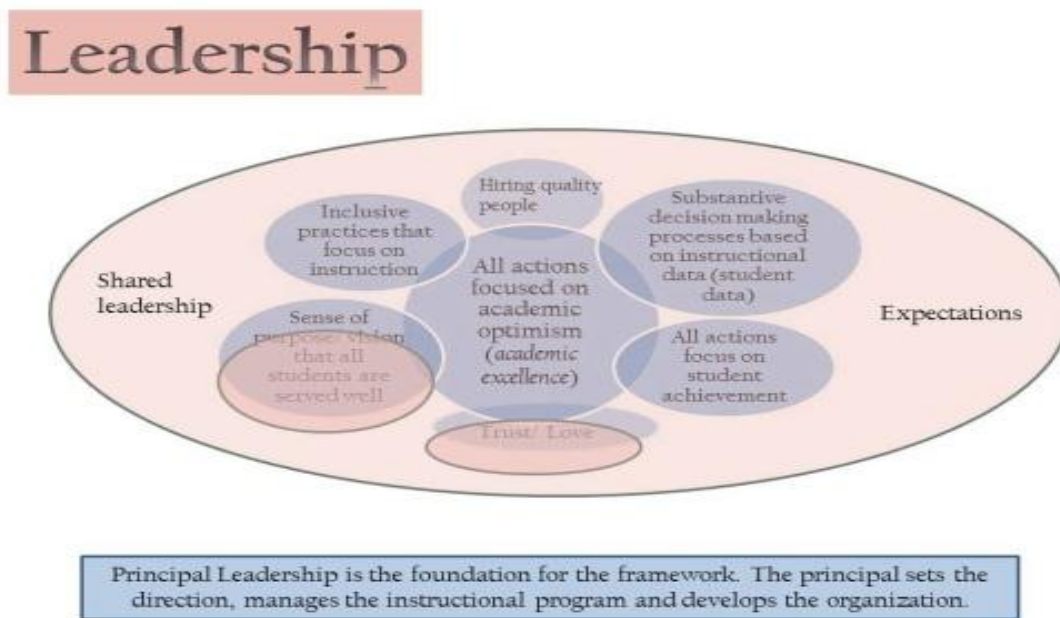**Figure 4.3.** *Principal educational equity focus linking to conceptual framework*

Equity Focus

Principal Leadership is the foundation for the framework. The principal sets the direction, manages the instructional program and develops the organization.

Fourth, all three principals were explicit in articulating a vision and purpose that held expectations for all students and a culture infused with trust and love. They did so by shared leadership.

Figure 4.4. *Principal shared leadership focus linking to conceptual framework*

In summary, Figure 4.5 represents the full set of findings of my study.   It shows central elements that principals should consider when developing their own approaches to leading for educational equity.

Figure 4.5. *Guide for Leading for Educational Equity based on Social Justice Foundation*
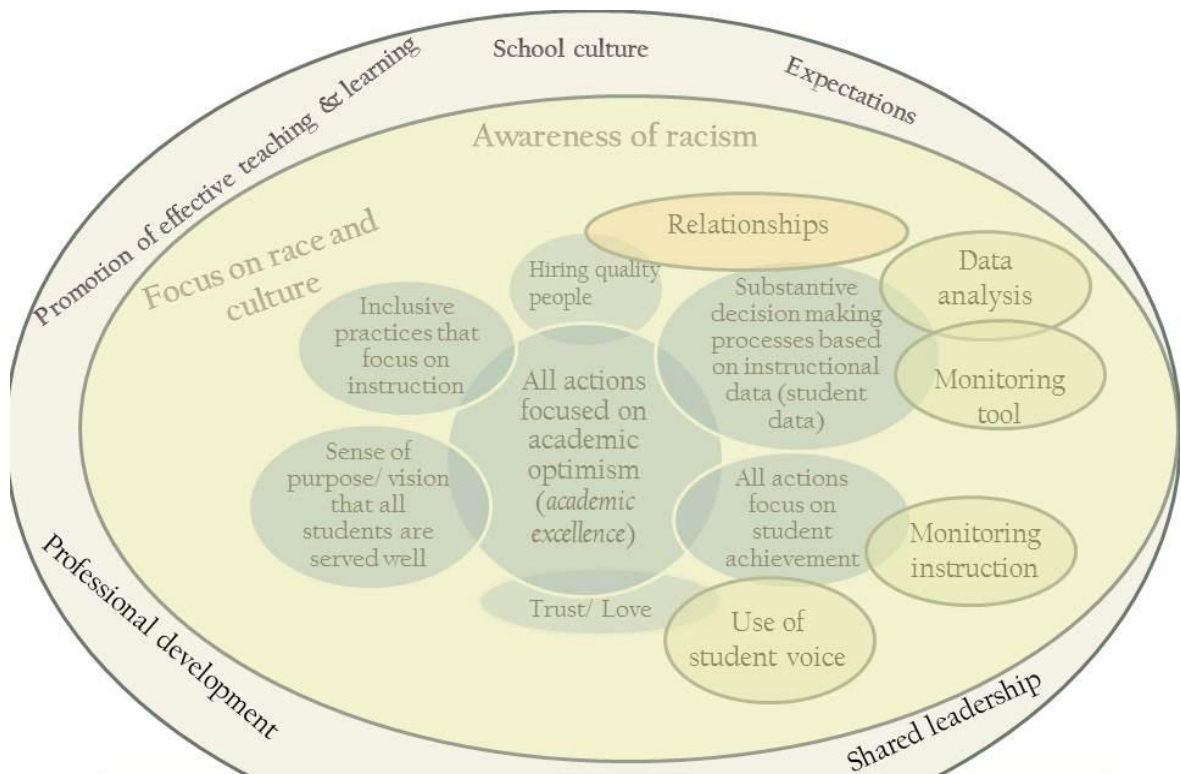
Practices, structures, leadership and equity focus

Summary of Findings

In this section, I summarize the key findings of the study. As noted in previous chapters, principals play a key role in increasing equity by supporting changes in schools that address existing disparities (Chisnall, 2010; Skrla, et al., 2001). In this section of the chapter, I highlight ways that their conscious work addressed these disparities.

Study participants. The participating principals, Abigail, Beverly and Clyde, all led schools where student achievement levels were challenged by low test scores. I selected these participants so that I could capture the perspectives of principals, from elementary, middle, and high school settings, who actively engaged in promoting educational equity and reducing inequities for African-American and Hispanic students.

Abigail, the elementary school principal, developed a vision through the new discipline plan and a staff development focus. Then she led the school's efforts to focus the staff on data analysis. Through professional development activities directed at addressing the disproportionality of outcomes based on race, she helped create a culture that emphasized achievement for all students.

Beverly, the middle school principal, led a school where changing demographics required a refocusing of the mission to emphasize a commitment to providing educational opportunities for all students. Her perception that there were inequities in the instructional program led her to direct teachers to use data to inform all aspects of the instructional program. She encouraged staff to analyze existing structures and make changes to enhance opportunities for all students and encourage them to participate in advanced level course work.

Clyde, the high school principal, led the school through building relationships with students and staff while creating an environment where teachers and students had pride in their school. He actively implemented data-based decision making to guide instructional practices, and formed a leadership team to implement those practices. In addition, he strategically hired teachers capable of ensuring that all students achieved at the highest levels.

Overview of differences. As I documented in chapter 5, I found important similarities and differences in the approaches that Abigail, Beverly, and Clyde took to promote educational equity in their schools. Below, I have summarized the similarities and differences in (a) their organizational approaches to improving instruction; (b) their approaches to seeking input and feedback; (c) their efforts to enhance teachers'

understanding of the context and causes of inequities; (d) the extent to which they commented on their own racial identity, (e) their recognition of the importance of role models; and (f) their approaches to improving teaching and learning.

Organizational approaches to improving instruction. Beverly, the middle school principal, was the most explicit in detailing the organizational approaches she took to improving instruction. For example, to increase consistency, she created decision trees to help guide instructional decisions. Beverly also introduced new ways for teachers to learn from each other through observational rounds.

Approaches to seeking input and feedback. Although outside feedback from district department supervisors was available to all principals; only Clyde, the high school principal, sought outside feedback about his instructional program and shared that feedback with his staff.   Clyde was also most direct in his approach to seeking input from students and making certain that he included students' voices in the decision-making process. In contrast, Abigail, the elementary principal, did not reference seeking input from students or giving voice to their stated concerns.

Enhancing teachers' understanding of the context and causes of inequities. All three principals shared that race played a role in the way they addressed inequitable student achievement outcomes; yet, only Abigail (elementary) and Beverly (middle school) took advantage of the services offered by the district equity team. Clyde, the high school principal, created a separate orientation for teachers new to his school to focus on his expectation that teachers pay attention to the unique instructional needs of each student. Abigail identified the broadest range of topics related to racial inequality in student achievement discussions with teachers. For example, Abigail used book clubs to

introduce teachers to issues associated with bias, colorblindness, cultural awareness, institutionalized racism, and White privilege. Although they addressed the needs in different ways, they each stayed focused on addressing the inequitable student outcomes.

Acknowledgement of their own racial identity. The three principals differed in the extent to which they discussed their own racial identity and its relationship to their approaches to leading for equity. Beverly, the middle school principal, and the only African-American participant, openly discussed her racial and cultural identity and commented on her own experiences with racism. Similarly, Abigail, the elementary principal, discussed her experiences as a White person, and how those experiences reflected conditions of White privilege. Abigail explicitly described institutionalized inequities and White privilege as forms of racism. She was the most explicit of the principals in describing how she went about discussing racism with her parent community. In contrast to both Beverly and Abigail, Clyde, the White high school principal, did not discuss his own racial or cultural identity at all. Studying race as a leadership factor went beyond the scope of this study.

Recognizing the importance of role models. Beverly and Clyde both discussed the importance of ensuring that students developed strong relationships with role models that would enhance their academic efficacy. Beverly was particularly explicit in detailing her recognition of the important and positive cultural impact African-American and Hispanic students experienced when building relationships with role models of their own race.

Approaches to improving teaching and learning. Given the different developmental levels of the students served by the respondents' schools, it is perhaps not

surprising that the three principals described distinct and unique approaches to improving teaching and learning to address inequitable learning outcomes for students. Abigail, the elementary principal, focused on linking daily teaching to daily data to inform instruction. Beverly, the middle school principal, explained the steps she took to address a lack of cultural competence among her teachers. Notably, Beverly also was the only principal to discuss steps she took to ensure the inclusion of students receiving special education services. Clyde, the high school principal commented on the approaches he adopted to create a non-bureaucratic environment where teachers could focus solely on teaching. Clyde also was unique in emphasizing his efforts to seek the input of students on the effectiveness of teaching and learning in the school.

This summary highlighted the similarities and differences in the approaches that Abigail, Beverly and Clyde took in their efforts to promote educational equity, as social justice leaders. I turn next to a discussion of these findings in light of the research reviewed in chapter 2.

Discussion of Findings

In chapter 2, I identified four strategies commonly adopted by principals to address inequities within their schools: leadership for equity, an equity mission and focus, equity enhancing practices, and structures. I discuss each of these approaches in the sections that follow.

Leadership. All three principals in my study described aspects of four ways that they exercised leadership to address inequities: (a) shared leadership, (b) developing vision, (c) setting expectations, and (d) creating a trusting environment. These four areas are reflected in the conceptual framework I developed to guide this study. All four

aspects of leadership for equity, evident in the practices described by the participants, also were identified by McNaulty's (2011), whose work formed the basis for my conceptual framework. McNaulty identified leadership as foundational to practices that enhance social justice.

  Shared leadership. Researchers have reported that principals must actively share leadership if they wish to provide effective instructional leadership (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Willison, 2008; Waters & Marzano, 2005; Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). This study confirmed the importance of shared leadership. Principals reported sharing leadership to enhance their capacity to provide effective instructional leadership. All three principals actively engaged in building leadership skills among their teaching staff. They all created professional development opportunities for teachers, particularly for teacher leaders, on enhancing equity through data analysis that highlighted race.

  Developing a vision of equitable outcomes for all students. As I noted in chapter 2, Brown et al. (2011), whose research informed my conceptual framework, found that changing practices of racism involves leadership practices that foster a school community's vision of equitable outcomes for all students. Manning and Kovich (2003) also found that principals must organize their schools around clear goals for eliminating the achievement gap and promoting equity and excellence.. Similarly, McNaulty (2011) asserted that school leaders' efforts to develop a vision and expectations for equitable outcomes for all students exemplified social justice-enhancing practices. This study confirms that principals who engage in leading for equity focus on developing vision and expectations for equitable outcomes. Without hesitation, all three principals detailed a clear visions and clear expectations for their school staff, students, and community.

Moreover, the principals focused on hiring quality teacher leaders and empowering them to be part of the leadership team's efforts to carry out the schools' vision.

Setting expectations for equity. Brown et. al. (2011) reported that leadership for social justice involved setting expectations for excellence and insisting that educators provide quality services to all students and encourage them to perform at their highest levels. As I will discuss in the following section, all three principals took explicit steps to promote a focus on enhancing educational equity.

Enhancing trust and creating a loving environment.   In McNaulty's (2011) study, the creation of a trusting and loving environment emerged as an important indicator of leading for social justice Similarly, Marzano's (2003) noted that leadership practices that enhance trust impact the effective implementation of all levels (school, teacher, and student) of the factors that made schools that work. School leadership in such a trusting environment has a positive relationship with student achievement, and ultimately impacts educational equity. This study confirms the importance of trust-building practices for principals seeking to lead for educational equity. The participants provided multiple examples of how they developed trusting relationships with their students, staff and community. They all viewed these trust-building practices as vital to their leadership success.

Equity focus. Researchers report that although principals develop a number of approaches to addressing inequities in student learning outcomes, these approaches each incorporate an equity focus in all aspects of leadership practice. For example, Brown et. al. (2011) found that principals seeking to create more equitable outcomes were willing to confront and change practices of racism in their schools. More directly, Singleton (2008)

135

argued that educators must discuss race because, "Race is not the only factor… but, it is the missing factor [in addressing educational inequities]." Similarly, Mazzacco (2006) argued that dialogue on race and racial disparities in education is essential in reaching the conclusion that a color-conscious approach supports racially equitable policies. I found that all the principals in the study were influenced by deeply held beliefs in the importance of engaging in practices and developing structures that led to more equitable outcomes for all students. Abigail, Beverly and Clyde were aware of the need to address racism, and all expressed their commitment to addressing any evidence of racism in their schools. All three principals focused on race during dialogues that took place during multiple facets of their work; including professional development, leadership team meetings, and data analysis meetings.

Practices for developing school culture and relationships. Researchers have identified a number of practices that principals use when leading for educational equity. The principals in this study identified implementing a number of these practices. For example, Williams (2003), Brown et al. (2011), and McNaulty (2011) all reported that examining a school's culture is one of the first major steps toward closing the racial achievement gap. Developing a positive school culture is the foundation for any change or school improvement efforts. School culture can have a profound effect on student achievement (Smith & Lambert, 2008). To influence effective change in student behaviors and outcomes, educational leaders must foster a positive school culture (Smith & Lambert, 2008). All three respondents reported engaging in building school culture with practices that involved the creation of structures that enhanced equity in student outcomes. These three principals also described using equity-enhancing practices of

136

relationship building identified by both Brown et al. (2011) and McNaulty (2011), which impacts the school culture with students' everyday experiences. These researchers also reported that principals who lead for educational equity actively promoted equity enhancing teaching and learning practices, such as school culture and relationships.

Creating structures to enhance equity. As I have shown in chapters 4 and 5, all three principals used multiple means of enhancing teaching and learning to improve learning outcomes for all students. Many of these approaches required that the principals create new structures similar to those identified some years ago by Scheurich and Skrla (2003), Scott (2001), and Scheurich, Skrla and Johnson (2000), and highlighted more recently by Dahir and Stone (2009), Brown et al. (2011), and McNaulty (2011). Abigail, Beverly, and Clyde each created equity-enhancing structures; including data analysis, instruction monitoring, and systematic approaches to enhancing student learning outcomes. Clyde developed unique structural methods for obtaining and acting on student feedback, and valued student voice in his decision making process.

Structures for data analysis and monitoring instruction. Abigail, Beverly, and Clyde all used data analysis meetings to analyze formative and summative data disaggregated by race. Principals reported that student achievement increased as a response to this strategic use of data. These findings confirm research summarized by Scott (2001), who found that systemic use of data is key for change in practice. Although the principals referred to these meetings using different names, they had the same stated purpose.

The three principals also created monitoring tools to monitor student data at their schools. They agreed that the purpose of the monitoring tool was to allow teachers to use

137

the same data disaggregated by race data, to see the disparities in African American and Hispanic student scores. All schools used formative scores, summative scores, course grades by departments and grade level and the district predictor model data. They all analyzed across classes, teachers, and individual students. Each school utilized all available instructional data to look at individual student needs.

Each of the principals promoted the use of data to uncover and erase systemic inequities, which connected to the research of Scheurich and Skrla (2003). One principal went a step further and required teachers to keep course grade books by subgroups. Indeed, all three principals used monitoring tools to impact instruction and create more opportunities for students in classes traditionally considered gate-keeping, or barriers to opportunity, courses for African-American and Hispanic students. All three principals adopted similar approaches to monitoring instruction within their schools. These approaches included calendars for structured observations, teacher monitoring plans, and teacher observations during their professional evaluation and non-evaluation years. In addition, all principals created instructional leadership teams that focused on teaching and learning, not on management issues.

Structures to Enhance Student Learning Outcomes. Like Dahir and Stone (2009), I also found that when principals made strategic decisions about instruction and intervention based on data, with the specific purpose of removing barriers to learning, then schools moved beyond good intentions and started to make systematic changes. I found evidence of similar decision-making processes in respondents' descriptions of their work. These principals' practices aligned with those social justice practices identified in the research by Scheurich, Skrla and Johnson (2000). These researchers argue that

leaders cannot and should not accept inequitable achievement as a given and need to focus on "internal or *systemic* inequities "because they are built into the processes and procedures of the system that is the school" (p. 80). The principals in this study actively created structures to address systemic inequities, as shown by their school data detailed in chapter 4.

Structures for obtaining and acting on student feedback. Data revealed that principals promoted educational equity by obtaining and acting on student feedback. This finding is an important contribution to scholarship on leading for social justice. Clyde structured multiple opportunities to obtain feedback from students.   The students met with teachers monthly to discuss instructional issues from a students' perspective. In addition, Clyde talked with a sample of students after classroom observations to discuss their understanding of the lesson and collect feedback. Clyde considered giving students multiple opportunities to voice their views on school conditions an important component of leadership practice.

Recommendations for Further Research

As I have stated previously, numerous studies document the existence of educational inequity for African-American and Hispanic students and the need for change in our public school system (Boykin & Noguera, 2011; Skrla, McKenzie & Scheurich, 2009; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Singleton & Linton, 2006; Berlak, 2001; Scheurich & Skrla, 2001).   Social justice is the foundational concept for educational equity, as social justice addresses disparities (Marshall & Olivia, 2006) in all areas (education, housing, employment, admissions, etc.). Educational equity specifically addresses the disparities students experience in schools. Yet, at the time of this study, a review of existing

literature revealed limited research linking social justice and student achievement (Urban, 2008), and even fewer studies examined the role of the principal in establishing educational equity. Noguera (2002) noted that because educational leaders have not prioritized equity in public education, principals with the knowledge, skills, and courage to lead for greater equity in academic outcomes and treatment of students are rare. Indeed, researchers like Brown et al. (2011) and McNaulty (2011), whose work informed this study, argued that principals must lead by consciously addressing issues of social justice. Theoharis (2010) argued that although recent research has established the link between educational equity and social justice, a need still exists for further research to help us move beyond rhetoric to translate theory into action, and build upon the successful practices identified in this study.   Future research should investigate principals that lead for educational equity in a district that did not mandate this idea and should examine practices across a variety of school districts, with the principal as the primary unit of analysis.

This study explored principals' descriptions of the actions they took to increase achievement of African-American and Hispanic students in their schools. Further comparison studies are needed to explore these leadership actions. In addition, the concept of the principals' race should be explored with regards to understanding their own racial and cultural identity. Research including teacher and student perceptions would be beneficial. For example, an in-depth study of daily experiences and teacher reactions to principals as they lead for educational equity would be informative. In addition, a study that focuses on higher level leadership with a superintendent would also be beneficial.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings have numerous implications for policy and practice and suggest that policy makers should monitor each key mandate, since several principals in this district failed to follow the directive to address educational equity within their schools. Districts should highlight where principals have impacted students' achievement through the leading for educational equity.

This study identified some of the actions that principals took as social justice in action, that promoted educational equity in their schools. As a result, the findings have implications for developing leadership practices that promote equity. Districts should consider having mentors for new principals as they develop their visions of equitable learning outcomes for students of their schools.

In summary, I offer the following recommendations:

- The federal government should learn from NCLB and the impact that disaggregating data by race had on school structures and practices.

- Districts should develop a plan to monitor any system-wide mandates, with clear outcomes, benchmarks, and resources for principals.

- Districts should design multi-year professional development activities to deepen principals' knowledge of racially-based inequities before issuing mandates.

- Districts should identify principals that are currently leading for educational equity to establish best practices.

- Any professional development plan created by the district should include an evaluation plan prior to implementation.

- Districts should train their human resources staffing department about the educational equity to impact candidate screening, recruitment and hiring practices.

- Districts should train all central office personnel to support schools in promoting educational equity, to impact the human capital of resource allocation.

- Principals should collaborate with colleagues and have open dialogues about race and strategies for addressing inequities within their schools.

- Principals should advocate for a plan to build their capacity so they can impact the racial achievement gap for African-American and Hispanic students in their schools.

- Future principals should complete courses on the following as they are learning to become principals: (1) racial and cultural identity, (2) data analysis, (3) instructional monitoring plans, (4) the importance of developing a school culture, and (5) educational equity. Understanding their own racial identity is key to being able to lead others in this journey. This concept requires a lot of reflection and how principals need to plan for their next steps, and cannot be one single course. These ideas should also be woven through all coursework to prepare principals for leadership.

Conclusions

The findings that I have reported in this dissertation reveal the conscious decisions that three principals made to address inequities in their schools. As detailed in chapter 2, integrating social justice into the educational setting requires that educators

142

make conscious decisions that decrease marginalization. Building upon that idea, Ford (2010) explained, "enacting leadership for 'social justice' refers to the practice of those principals who consciously and consistently work with their schools to alter the status quo of under-serving predictable, often racialized, groups of students to create schools that *benefit* all students" (p. 7). As I have reported; Abigail, Beverly, and Clyde all undertook such conscious and consistent work.

Though many researchers have correctly surmised that this dream of educational equity has not been achieved (Noguera, 2011; Singleton & Linton, 2006; Ogbu, 2003; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Berlak, 2001; Haycock, 2001); there is hope--through research, continued attention, and focused implementation of specific strategies-- that districts and principals can make educational equity a reality. Chisnall (2010) noted that her study's social justice school leaders both "acknowledge the need for systemic equity, even in challenging contexts, and take actual steps to ensure excellence and equity for all students" (p. 59). The school leader has a moral obligation to pursue social justice for all students (Saxe, 2011). The principals I studied described specific steps they took to address inequities. With these descriptions outlined, this study has attempted to further our understanding of how principals affect educational equity for African-American and Hispanic students in their schools. Excellence for all is more than a phrase. Abigail, Beverly and Clyde all translated these words into action and succeeded in their efforts to address marginalization in their schools.

Appendices

Appendix A: Principal Meeting Memo

How principals promote educational equity in their schools
Principal Memo

There is a large body of literature that identifies the principal as an <u>essential piece</u> to having schools that are a model of educational equity yet there is *little evidence* outlining <u>a clear model</u> that principals could utilize in planning for educational equity in their schools. We need to know more about how principals <u>specifically lead</u> for educational equity.

You are invited to participate in a study which seeks to describe how a principal leads for educational equity, which is the phenomenon of interest of this study. This study is in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a doctor of education degree from the Department of Education Policy and Leadership, University of Maryland, College Park. I am a student in this project, and the principal investigator is Dr. Hanne B. Mawhinney, associate professor.

You are invited because community superintendents have indicated that you area model of leading for educational equity. For this study, educational equity is defined as high expectations and access to meaningful and relevant learning for all students so that outcomes are not predictable by race. An abstract of the study is enclosed for your review and information. The project has been approved under the research requirements of the university and the relevant school system regulation. However, your participation is strictly voluntary, and you are not required to participate. There is no employment condition to participate, and there is no obligation to me.

If you do wish to participate, the amount of time involved is estimated from 8 hours to 15 hours over the course of several weeks and months. This includes preparation to be interviewed, participation in one or more audio-taped interviews, and review and approval of verbatim typed transcripts of the interviews.

A detailed consent form is enclosed. Please read it carefully as you consider participation in this study. A self-addressed stamped envelope is provided for you to mail back a signed consent form, should you agree to participate. Please return the form by [date].

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I look forward to conducting this study and working with you. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Cynthia M. Eldridge

Enclosures

Copy to:
Dr. Mawhinney

CONSENT FORM

Project Title	*Principals Leading for Educational Equity*
Why is this research being done?	This is a qualitative research study which seeks to describe how a principal leads for educational equity, which is the phenomenon of interest of this study. The research project is being conducted by Dr. Hanne B. Mawhinney, associate professor, and Cynthia M. Eldridge, Ed.D. candidate, Department of Education Policy and Leadership, College of Education, at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this project because you were identified by a nomination process as a leader for educational equity.
What will I be asked to do?	The procedures in this study involve asking you to voluntarily: ▪ Agree to participate in the research study and to be interviewed about your journey in leading for educational equity ▪ Prepare to be interviewed by reviewing any data, action plans, and/or other information related to your journey for leading for educational equity ▪ Participate in one to four audio tape-recorded interviews of no more than 2.0 hours each at a mutually agreeable location, with questions focused on your journey in leading for educational equity ▪ Sample questions may include: ▪What structure and practices and professional development do you have that support: o Expectations; school culture; relationships; visions; and rigorous instruction for all students (enrollment and success) ▪What evidence do you have that shows their effectiveness? ▪Describe your monitoring and accountability structures and practices. Describe how discussing race at your school has impacted teaching and learning. ▪ Review, correct, comment on, and approve the verbatim typed transcript of your audio-taped interview(s), consisting of about 1 hour each at your convenience; and ▪ Review, correct, comment on, and approve the text of previously approved verbatim interview statements and other personally identifiable information to be used in the narrative report, consisting of about 1 hour at your convenience.

CONSENT FORM

Project Title	*Principals Leading for Educational Equity*

What about confidentiality?	You will not be asked to reveal any other non-public information (such as age, weight, home address, telephone number, or financial data) or other personal information (such as political, religious, cultural, family, or health and medical information).
	We will do our best to keep your non-public and personal information confidential. To help protect the confidentiality of all non-public and personal information, all research materials will be kept in locked file cabinets and password-protected computer files.
	If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible.
	<u>Audiotape Recordings</u>
	This research project involves making audio tapes of the interviews in order to produce a verbatim text transcript of each interview. The verbatim text allows for greater authenticity of the information gathering process and will be reviewed, checked, and approved by you, as noted above.
	The audiotapes will be used only for this project. The audiotapes, along with the transcripts and other data, will be kept in a locked file cabinet. No one beyond the principal investigator, Dr. Hanne Mawhinney, and the student investigator, Cynthia Eldridge, will have access to the tapes or verbatim transcripts. At the project's conclusion, the audiotapes will be destroyed.
	Your permission on whether to be audio taped during participation in this study is provided on page 3.

What are the risks of this research?	There are no physical or financial risks to this study. The process for storing data will ensure confidentiality.

What are the benefits of this research?	This research is not designed to help any of the participants personally. The benefits for this study include an opportunity for participants to share and add to limited research in this area. The study may be significant for theory, for policy, and for practice.

CONSENT FORM

Project Title	*Principals Leading for Educational Equity*

Do I have to be in this research? May I stop participating at any time?	Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If you decide to stop participating, all information and materials will be returned to you or destroyed, at your discretion.

What if I have questions?	The principal investigator in this research is Dr. Hanne B. Mawhinney, associate professor, Department of Education Policy and Leadership, College of Education, at the University of Maryland, College Park. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Dr. Mawhinney at 2201 Benjamin Building, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742; 301-405-4546; or by e-mailing hmawhinn@wam.umd.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: **Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742; (e-mail) irb@deans.umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-0678** This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

Statement of Age of Subject and Consent	Your signature indicates that: ▪ you are at least 18 years of age; ▪ the research has been explained to you; ▪ your questions have been fully answered; and ▪ you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.

Audio taping Permission	___ I agree to be audio taped during my participation in this study ___ I do not agree to be audio taped during my participation in this study

Signature and Date	**NAME OF SUBJECT**	
	SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT	
	DATE	

Appendix C: Interview Questions

Interview Questions for Principals
based on model for leading for equity in the district

- How do awareness, knowledge, and understanding of YOUR own racial and cultural identity promote effective teaching and learning?*

- How do awareness, knowledge, and understanding the racial and cultural identity of students promote effective teaching and learning in your school?* *(specifically for Hispanic and African American students)*

- How have you helped your teachers establish learning environments that are conscious of race and culture to ensure implementation of culturally responsive instruction?* *(specifically for Hispanic and African American students)*

- What obstacles have you faced at your schools and how have you dealt with those obstacles?

- What structure and practices and professional development do you have that support:
    - Expectations; school culture; relationships; visions; and rigorous instruction for all students (enrollment and success) *(specifically for Hispanic and African American students)*

- Describe your monitoring and accountability structures and practices.

149

- How are you addressing racism, anti-racist practice and white privilege in your

  school?

Adapted essential questions around equity studies for the district

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