Disrupting Injustice: Principals Narrate the Strategies They Use to Improve Their Schools and Advance Social Justice

GEORGE THEOHARIS

Syracuse University

Background/Context: *A group of educators have demonstrated success not only with White middle-class and affluent students but also with students from varied racial, socioeconomic, linguistic, ability, and cultural backgrounds. A reoccurring theme from these schools and from the literature on school change is that exemplary leadership helps create the necessity for change and helps make the realities of change happen. More specifically, leaders at these schools where students traditionally marginalized are thriving come to administration with a commitment, or larger "call," to focus their leadership on issues of equity and justice.*

Purpose: *Scholars and administrators alike have called for "constructive models" of this kind of leadership. This article provides examples of these accomplishments in practice. It also provides insight into the realities of leading for social justice by revealing what principals sought to accomplish and how they approached that work.*

Participants: *This article focuses on 6 principals—2 elementary, 2 middle, and 2 high school—who (1) led a public school, (2) possessed a belief that promoting social justice is a driving force behind what brought them to their leadership position, (3) advocated, led, and kept at the center of their practice/vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and/or other historically marginalizing conditions, and (4) had evidence to show that their work has produced a more just school.*

Research Design: *The qualitative study in which these analyses are grounded used a positioned subject approach. The method of data collection took place over one school year and included in-depth interviews with the principals, a review of documents and materials, site visits, discussions/interviews with school staff, a detailed field log, and a group meeting of the principal participants. This article is a focused discussion of aspects of a larger study, using the principals' voices to illustrate key themes.*

Findings: *These leaders narrate the strategies they used to disrupt four kinds of school injustice: (1) school structures that marginalize, segregate, and impede achievement, such as pullout programs; (2) a deprofessionalized teaching staff who could benefit from focused staff development; (3) a school climate that needed to be more welcoming to marginalized families and the community; and (4) disparate student achievement levels.*

Recommendations: *A series of lessons emerged from this research: that social justice in schools is more than rhetoric—indeed, it can be achieved; that inclusive schooling is a necessary and enriching component to enacting justice; that increasing staff capacity is essential to carry out a comprehensive agenda focused on equity; and that creating a climate that deeply values racial, cultural, and economic diversity is a key strategy to enacting justice.*

> We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us; we already know more than we need to do that; and whether or not we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we haven't so far.
> — Ronald Edmonds, 1979, p. 15

Edmonds's call to all educators presents a specific challenge to school leadership. At its core, this challenge is about recognizing that schools are failing historically marginalized[1] students, and then making the decision to correct this. To that end, school leaders must create school structures, teaching staff, climate, communities, and achievement results that support and demonstrate success for every child. The present article focuses on this kind of school leadership—principals who saw how injustice was being perpetuated for marginalized students in their schools, who chose to take up that challenge, and who were able to make strides to change that reality.

This article presents an analysis of how principals committed to equity and justice understood and explained what they saw as the impact on their schools of the changes they made. The analysis is based on a larger study on leaders committed to social justice (Theoharis, 2004, 2007, 2009); the intent here is to illustrate the key strategies that the principals studied used to create more just and equitable schools. This work offers a new perspective to the growing body of literature on leadership for social justice in two ways. First, it takes the principal as the unit of analysis (Theoharis, 2007). Other research uses schools in which student achievement has risen as the basic unit of analysis, and then move to investigate the principal (Maynes & Sarbit, 2000; Scheurich, 1998; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001). In the present study, the principals were selected because they demonstrated a profound commitment to

seeking equity and justice for marginalized students; the research then moved to investigate what these principals accomplished and how they did so. Second, there are few, if any, descriptions grounded in the daily practice of the principalship that addresses what is possible in terms of school reform centered on equity and justice (Marshall & Ward, 2004; Theoharis, 2004). Professional development and preparation of school leaders require models of equity and justice. The present article provides examples of these accomplishments in practice. It also provides insight into the realities of leading for social justice by revealing what principals sought to accomplish and how they approached that work.

DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Scholars have offered many different definitions of social justice (Bogotch, 2002; Connell, 1993; Dantley & Tillman, 2006). For this article, it built on Dantley and Tillman's foundational framing that social justice is largely about changing inequities and marginalization. Heeding Bogotch's call to situate this within the context of school leadership, the following definition of leadership for social justice is used to frame this article:

> These principals advocate, lead, and keep at the center of their practice and vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States. This definition centers on addressing and eliminating marginalization in schools. In doing so, inclusive schooling practices for students with disabilities, English language learners, and other students traditionally segregated in schools are also necessitated by this definition. (Theoharis, 2007, p. 222)

The principals who participated in the larger study agreed that this definition was a defining characteristic of their leadership. As a condition for participation, their actions also met this definition (see the sampling section in this article). This article describes the ways in which leaders tell the story of how they "live out" this definition in their practice.

In taking this definition of leadership for social justice, this research, and specifically, this article, is situated within the context of activist research (Fine, 1994). Fine explained that activist research captures at least one of four different strategies: breaking the silence, denaturalizing what appears so natural, attaching what is to what could be, and engaging in participatory activist research. The larger study on which this writ-

ing is based used a combination of the first three strategies; however, the present article draws on the first one primarily: breaking the silence.

Breaking the silence was a pivotal strategy for this research because extant literature suggests that principals seeking social justice do not fit the traditional mold, and their approaches are not always accepted by colleagues or consistent with community norms (Dantley, 2002; Rapp, 2002; Theoharis, 2007). According to Brown (2004), Rapp, Silent, and Silent (2001) found that 90% of school practitioners and university faculty believe in and value technical leadership over moral or courageous leadership. Marshall and Ward (2004) concluded that educational leaders and the general public are more comfortable with a view of school administrators as managers and bureaucrats instead of as leaders who address issues of equity and marginalization. Vibert and Portelli (2000) concurred that innovative and critical leadership is not valued, sought after, nor wanted by many local communities and district officials. Bogotch (2002) and Dantley (2002) reported that leaders who fall outside the traditional view of administrators have been seen as "miscreants" or "troublemakers." Rapp (2002) reported that this results in school leaders being "trained, hired and rewarded" (p. 230) for maintaining this technical and traditional leadership that has helped build and maintain an inequitable status quo.

The approach taken here was "breaking the silence" (Fine, 1994) work because the principals in this study are a minority of leaders whose stories and experiences are not a part of the traditional educational administration metanarrative—a metanarrative of managers and perpetuators of the status quo that serves to marginalize particular groups of students. The stories of the principals shared in this article are not typically told. Although this work is grounded in Fine's critical and feminist perspective of breaking the silence, it is important to recognize that this grounding shares similar concerns and ideals with the traditions of narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) and critical race theory (Bell, 1993, 2004; Delgado & Stafanic, 1999). To be clear, principals in this study are not narrating their experiences with racism, nor are principals an oppressed or marginalized group. However, given that principals committed to justice and equity defy the image and metanarrative of the "traditional" principal, there is a limited number of "constructive models" of social justice leadership (Marshall & Ward, 2004; Theoharis, 2004), and there is a void of scholarship that includes and provides space for their voice. Accordingly, this article creates space for these principals to narrate their work publicly.

PURPOSE

The present discussion is part of a larger investigation of "social justice principals" that focuses on three aspects of their leadership: (1) their accomplishments or advancement toward more socially just schools, (2) the resistance they faced in their social justice work, and (3) the professional and personal self-care strategies they developed and used to maintain their pursuit of justice in the face of resistance (Theoharis, 2004, 2007, 2009). This article focused on these leaders narrating their advancements toward equity and justice. To that end, the purpose of this article is to address the following question: In what ways do principals who identify themselves as committed to social justice narrate how they advanced more socially just practices in their public schools?

METHODOLOGY

The qualitative study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) in which these analyses are grounded used a positioned subject approach (Conrad, Haworth, & Millar, 1993). The positioned subject approach (Conrad et al.) assumes that the principals in this study actively make meaning from and interpret their work. The data illustrate key themes and principal strategies as derived from the larger study; thus, an overview of the research methodology of the larger study is provided to give readers important perspective about the context in which explications of these strategies derived. Full descriptions of the methods and data from the larger study are provided in other publications (Theoharis, 2004, 2007, 2009).

SAMPLING

Using purposeful and snowball sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Maxwell, 1998), 18 principals were identified to participate in the study. The selection criteria were that the principals (1) led a public school, (2) possessed a belief that promoting social justice is a driving force behind what brought them to their leadership position, (3) advocated, led, and kept at the center of their practice/vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and/or other historically marginalizing conditions, and (4) had evidence to show their work has produced a more just school. These 18 principals spanned three states and four major metropolitan areas. Seven of the original 18 met the selection criteria; 1 of these ultimately chose not to participate, leaving 6 principals remaining to inform this article.[2]

My own social location and experience informed my view of this study; I came to this research as a White male heterosexual principal committed to seeking social justice. In my experience as a school administrator, I saw the promise that leaders with deep convictions about justice and equity brought to their schools , and I witnessed the results they achieved for marginalized students. I felt that this leadership held promise for informing a broader understanding of school leadership.

All 6 of the selected principals were leading Midwestern urban schools: 2 from elementary schools, 2 from middle schools, and 2 from high schools. They ranged in age from early 30s to early 50s and had between 3 and 15 years of administrative experience. One principal is Asian and the rest are White; 1 identified as gay, and the other 5 identified themselves as heterosexual; and 3 are women and 3 are men. Although this sample appears diverse in a number of ways, this sample is not diverse racially or in school setting; 5 of the principals are White, and all the schools are located in urban settings. Although the lack of racial diversity of the sample presents certain limitations to this research, given the current reality that the vast majority of principals in the United States are White (Ford, 2008), it illustrates that equity and justice are the work of White leaders and cannot be seen as the calling or duty only of leaders of color.

This was put into perspective further during this study. During an observation at an administrator meeting after a heated conversation between principals, an African American principal nearing retirement came over to speak privately with two principals participating in this study and said,

> I am tired of being the only one who talks about race and equity. It has always been seen as my—"the Black principal's" issue. . . [Tearing up] I take great comfort in the fact that as I retire, there are the two of you who seem to care so much about these issues. I feel like I am no longer alone, and *you are White*. White principals need to see race and equity issues as their own issues not just the issue of the "Black principal."

There is no intent here to pretend that the experiences of the principals in this study are universal to all school leaders or even representative of all principals seeking equity and justice, but they provide an important perspective on breaking the silence (Fine, 1994) for school leadership given that little has been written about school principals with these commitments (Marshall & Ward, 2004; Theoharis, 2004). Although 5 of the principals studied here are White, their identities and social locations are

complex and contested (see Theoharis, 2008b). It should be acknowledged that one's social location often influences the understanding of social injustice, and so this is a limitation of the study. The following pseudonyms are used for the principals: Principal Eli, Principal Dale, Principal Meg, Principal Natalie, Principal Taylor, and Principal Scott. The principals' social location follows and includes the information that each of the leaders felt was most salient; thus, not the same information is presented for each principal.

   Principal Eli is a White Jewish male in his mid-50s who spent much of his career running a neighborhood grocery business before returning to education to start a small high school in the neighborhood where he grew up. Principal Dale, also White, worked his way through the school district as a teacher, a coordinator for talented and gifted programs, an elementary principal, and, finally, a middle school principal. Principal Meg is White and in her late-30s. She began as head elementary principal when she was 28. She felt that she came to social justice work as a teacher in an urban elementary school. Principal Taylor is Asian American and also in her late-30s. She moved to the United States when she was very young as her family fled Vietnam. She also began her principalship when she was in her late 20s. Principal Natalie, an out-lesbian in her late 40s, worked for community nonprofits before becoming a physical education teacher, an athletic director, an assistant principal, and, now, a head high school principal. Principal Scott has degrees in engineering and music and began his career as a band instructor. In his early 40s, he is a White heterosexual male head middle school principal; previously, he was an assistant high school principal. Their names are included in Table 1, along with school demographic information to provide context to their work.

Table 1. School Demographic Information

Principal	School Level	Total Students	Students in Special Ed. (%)	Students in Poverty (%)	Students of Color (%)	Staff of Color (%)
Eli	High	375	20	90	99	67
Natalie	High	132	23	35	34	15
Scott	Mid.	450	25	47	49	13
Dale	Mid.	425	22	40	35	10
Meg	Elem.	360	6	25	38	5
Taylor	Elem.	290	8	8	34	15

Note. Students in Special Ed = students in the school with Individual Education Plans (IEPs), meeting IDEA disability criteria. This does not include students whose IEP is only for speech and language. Students in Poverty = students who qualify to receive free and reduced lunch. (Table from Theoharis, 2004)

DATA COLLECTION

The method of data collection took place over one school year and included in-depth interviews with the principals, a review of documents and materials, site visits, discussions and interviews with school staff, a detailed field log, and a group meeting of the principal participants. Once the 6 principals were identified, initial site visits and the first interviews were arranged.

The constant comparative method of data analysis was used to examine and reexamine the data and extract the strategies they used to address social justice issues (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Data triangulation was a key aspect of the analysis among the different principals; that is, at least 3 principals needed to share a strategy for that strategy to be incorporated into the results as a theme (Crowson, 1993). After 3 principals had discussed a particular strategy, that strategy was shared with the others during their next interview and site visits so that they could explore their own understandings of this strategy. In some cases, all 6 principals shared a strategy during initial interviews without further probing (i.e., eliminated pullout and segregated programs). In other cases, even after discussing the strategy across all 6 principals, only 3 said they had ever used it (i.e., incorporating social responsibility into the curriculum).

The next section describes each theme, along with representative examples of various strategies. Not all the ways in which these principals enacted each strategy were the same, and the differences between them are described in several cases. The intention is not to paint the leaders as monolithic group acting in the same manner, but to give salient examples of their work in their own voices.

The idea that these principals used specific strategies to disrupt "inequitable norms" and "injustice" came from how they approached and discussed their work. These principals explained that they did not merely enact a social justice agenda, but took specific actions in response to equity and justice problems that they witnessed and viewed as embedded their schools. While relying heavily on the principals' interpretations of their experiences (Conrad et al., 1993), ultimately, the names of the strategies and the names of the injustices they sought to disrupt were constructed. Each of these constructions is described in the next section.

DISRUPTING INJUSTICE

DISRUPTING INJUSTICE IN THE CONTEXT OF RESISTANCE

These principals' efforts to create more just and equitable schools were met with significant resistance. Before their efforts and strategies are described, it is important to explain this context of resistance. Substantial literature reports on the various resistances, barriers, and countervailing pressures to school change and, more specifically, to equity-oriented reform (Brown, 2004; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Shields, 2004; Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004). In honoring the breaking-the-silence (Fine, 1994) grounding of this work, it is essential to position the principals' work and accomplishments within the resistance they faced because it does not do justice to their struggle to portray it as straightforward or simplistic. Although the purpose of this article is to better understand how principals narrate their work to create more just and equitable schools, the context of resistance to their efforts is a necessary backdrop in beginning to understand this kind of leadership.

These leaders described this resistance as "enormous," "never ceasing," and "often unbearable." The data showed that resistance to their equity and social justice agendas came from two primary locations: within the school/community, and from the district and beyond (Theoharis, 2007).[3] The resistance from within the school/community in turn derived the enormity of daily work of the principalship, the momentum of the status quo, obstructive staff attitudes and beliefs, and insular/privileged parental expectations (Theoharis, 2008a). The resistance from the district and beyond took the forms of unsupportive central office administrators; fellow principals who lacked the will or skill to advance an equity-oriented agenda; a lack of financial, human, and professional development resources provided to schools by federal, state, and local funding streams; harmful state and federal regulations; and principal preparation programs that did not focus on equity or justice concerns (Theoharis, 2008a). For example, obstructive staff attitudes in four of the schools took the form of teachers not wanting students with special education labels to be their responsibility. Additionally, an example of harmful regulations was the ways in which state English as a second language and federal Title I policies were written, which promoted removing particular students from the general education core curriculum and instruction.

These forms or locations of resistance were not necessarily targeted at one particular event or strategy the principals used, but were dynamic and overlapping. They were ongoing and appeared, as one principal said,

"at every turn." The principals reported a significant physical and emotional toll and a persistent sense of discouragement as a result of the ongoing resistance they faced. One shared, "[Leading for social justice] tore at my soul. I knew this job would be hard, but I had no idea it would shake me to the core." However, in light of that resistance, they maintained their equity and justice agendas.

These principals developed their own resilience in order to maintain their agendas in the face of resistance (Theoharis, in press). For example, these principals sought out and developed supportive networks with a few similarly minded leaders that helped them deal with the daily pressure and resistance they faced. Although they felt a persistent sense of discouragement, one principal shared, "Sometimes at the end of the day if I had asked the right question or an important issue like why only Black kids get sent out of class, I felt I could come back and struggle on the next day." It was these seemingly small steps and their focus to "keep their eyes on the prize" that also allowed them to maintain this agenda. The resistance these leaders faced and how they dealt with that resistance while maintaining their equity and justice work require much more elaborated consideration then space permits. However, it will be important to address in future studies how resistance on the part of faculty, parents, and students was negotiated by principals. Even in the face of relentless resistance, these leaders sought to create more just schools.

DISRUPTING INJUSTICES: STRATEGIES PRINCIPALS USED

Given the conceptual framework of breaking the silence (Fine, 1994), this article uses the voices of these principals to narrate how they worked to disrupt injustice through their distinct strategies. In understanding these principals' effort to create more just and equitable schools, it was useful to frame their work around the "injustices" they discussed. These were defined as aspects of their experience as principals that they felt compromised the principles of social that justice they hoped to uphold and so sought to actively disrupt in their schools. These leaders advanced social justice by disrupting four kinds of injustice they observed to be present in their schools: (1) school structures that marginalize, segregate, and impede achievement, (2) a deprofessionalized teaching staff, (3) a school climate that needed to be more welcoming to marginalized families and disrupt the disconnect between the school and the community, low-income families, and families of color, and (4) disparate and low student achievement. This section provides a full description of how the 6 principals said they disrupted these injustices to create more equitable and just schools.[4] The intent here is to describe strategies that principals

can use to reshape their schools for social justice by referring to concrete efforts made by principals in these six schools, as told in the larger study evidence pool.

Table 2 provides an organized view of the injustices that the principals worked to disrupt and the strategies they used. For the remainder of this section, the strategies they described to disrupt each of the four injustices are presented. However, these principals did not use specific strategies with the fourth injustice they sought to disrupt (disparate and low student achievement); they believed that the confluence of the strategies used to disrupt the first three injustices collectively was responsible for the increases in student achievement. Thus, the section about the fourth injustice is structured differently than the other three.

Table 2. Strategies Principals Used to Disrupt Injustice

Injustice 1: School structures that marginalize, segregate, and impede achievement
Strategies to Disrupt
• Eliminate pullout/segregated programs.
• Increase rigor and access to opportunities.
• Increase student learning time.
• Increase accountability systems on the achievement of all students.

Injustice 2: Deprofessionalized teaching staff
Strategies to Disrupt
• Address issues of race.
• Provide ongoing staff development focused on building equity.
• Hire and supervise for justice.
• Empower staff.

Injustice 3: A Disconnect with the community, low-income families, and families of color
Strategies to Disrupt
• Create a warm and welcoming climate.
• Reach out intentionally to the community and marginalized families.
• Incorporate social responsibility into the school curriculum.

Injustice 4: Disparate and low student achievement
Strategies to Disrupt
• Confluence of all efforts and strategies

INJUSTICE 1: SCHOOL STRUCTURES THAT MARGINALIZE, SEGRE-GATE, AND IMPEDE ACHIEVEMENT

The principals described the conditions they found upon starting at their respective schools as built on norms that separated students into various fragmented programs. In these programs, students of color, students from low-income families, students learning English, and students with

disabilities were continually removed from general education classes to receive a fragmented curriculum from a range of teachers, much of which did not have a connection to the core or general education curriculum of the school. These pullout efforts effectively maintained the marginalization of these students and impeded their access to what one principal called "the good stuff"—the rigorous core curriculum.

These principals worked to change and improve various structures of their schools. They used four strategies to disrupt the school structures that marginalize, segregate, and impede achievement: (a) eliminate pullout/segregated programs, (b) increase rigor and access to opportunities, (c) increase student learning time, and (d) increase accountability systems for the achievement of all students.

Strategy: Eliminate pullout and segregated programs. The first strategy that these principals described that they used to change structures that marginalize, segregate, and impede achievement involved restructuring their schools to eliminate pullout/segregated programs. These principals spoke about ways they led their schools to move away from pullout services or segregated programming. This restructuring meant that they moved to inclusive special education services, changed to inclusive English language learner (ELL) services, and/or detracked the math program. One principal summed this up by stating, "Teaching students in heterogeneous groups within the regular classroom" was a critical "philosophical decision" that each of these principals made.

Principal Meg described why she sought to eliminate pullout and segregated programs at her elementary school:

> First, across teachers and families there was a uniform call for a reduction of class size. Second, when the staff and I really looked at our programs like Title I reading and ESL, it was clear that our Black and Brown kids and our poor kids were the ones who were being removed from their classroom. These were disturbing patterns.

Principal Meg realized that the programs in her school were perpetuating marginalization by separating students along racial and class lines. Even if that was not the intent of the program, her realization that these programs were maintaining segregation and injustice helped create the need to disrupt what she called "disturbing" patterns. Principal Meg continued about how that realization led to action:

> In looking at the call for smaller class size with all these separate and segregated programs, I worked with the state, the feds, and

my district supervisors to use the resources allocated across all the separate programs [Title I, ESL, Gifted and Talented, local minority achievement funds]. This required waivers and permissions to do this, but I pooled all those resources to lower class size.

Her school transformed from a having class size of about 24 to a class size of about 16, and all students received all their instruction from the classroom teacher. There were no more pullout programs—no more separate programs at that school. All the resources were used to create the situation in which one highly trained teacher was responsible for a small group of students. Principal Meg described what in reality was a long and complicated process to use targeted resources in a creative and school-wide manner. In eliminating these pullout programs, she looked holistically at her resources and made belonging to the general education classroom and the teaching, learning, and community that happen there her top priority in advancing equity and justice.

In a middle school example, Principal Dale described his work to eliminate pullout/resource room and self-contained special education services:

I used my special education teachers that had previously pulled students from their regular classes or offered self-contained classes for students with disabilities and had them team-teach with each grade level. Now, each grade level team has special education teachers to co-plan and coteach the curriculum—no separate pullout, no self-contained.

Principal Dale provided another example of using targeted resources in a manner that keeps students who were previously removed connected to their peers and the general education curriculum, thus eliminating pullout programs and increasing access and community. He continued about detracking math, "In regards to detracking math, we changed from grouping students in every grade by 'ability' for their math classes to grouping them heterogeneously for math. These classes were taught by the same math teachers and often team-taught with special education teachers." Under the previous tracked math program, students of color, students from low-income families, and students with disabilities were almost entirely segregated in the lower tracks. Eliminating that kind of segregated programming was central to giving students access to richer curriculum and instruction and was a key strategy that Principal Dale described.

Oakes (1985), as well as Frattura and Capper (2007), reported the damage caused by, and inequity of, tracking and separate pullout/self-contained programs for students with disabilities, ELL students, and students with other learning needs. The work of these scholars supported the efforts that principals narrated to eliminate pullout, segregated, and tracked programs. These principals made purposeful connections between inclusive service decisions and social justice aims. They maintained that creating and maintaining special and separate programs and curricula for groups of marginalized students denied these students the same education as, or a comparable education with, that which their peers were receiving. They positioned physical and academic inclusion in the general education classroom and curriculum as essential and a key aspect of social justice work. They described eliminating pullout and segregated programs as a critical component of the work of school leaders.

Strategy: Increase rigor and access to opportunities. The second strategy these principals shared that they used to disrupt "unjust" structures involved increasing the academic rigor in all students' classes, specifically the rigor for marginalized students, and providing access to broader school opportunities for marginalized students. Principal Scott discussed his restructuring of the daily middle school schedule so "all students had greater access to fine arts." He explained,

> Students often had to make the choice between [extra help in] math and taking band . . . my rich kids, many of them have music experiences outside of school, but for my poor students, they need to have opportunities like band and the arts in school. They should not have to make the choice between math and music . . . so we had to change they way we scheduled students.

Principal Scott provided an analysis of class relations and how he saw it in his school. He also believed that equity and access to opportunities for marginalized students was an essential lens to bring to planning school structures. This example was about creating schools for marginalized students that offer more than basic skills, more than drill and kill. The school he sought to create would provide access to a wealth of opportunities that are often afforded only to more privileged students. In his example, scheduling helped create a more equitable and socially just school program.

Principal Dale discussed detracking middle school math and how that provided both rigor and greater opportunities, saying,

> The remedial math classes don't work . . . the curriculum is not challenging. . . . Now [in the detracked math class], students are exposed to a broader base of mathematical work, moving away from what I would view as sort of basic drill and skill orientation, and giving kids opportunities to engage in more higher level mathematical thinking.

His critique of warehousing struggling students positioned increasing rigor and opportunities as a major driving force behind the changes he led to detrack math.

The result of these efforts was a balanced and demographically representative enrollment across all school programs. Frattura and Capper (2007) called for this attention to data and equity in planning and developing all school services. Lyman and Villani (2002) argued that students living in poverty are often given lower quality programs accompanied by lower expectations for their achievement. They argued against the belief "that schools can never overcome poverty's impact, that we should just settle for lesser learning, for lower academic achievement in high poverty schools" (p. 275). Lyman and Villani's conclusion was consistent with findings in this study that principals dismantled a two-tier system that marginalized students by increasing both rigor of academics and access to a wider breadth of opportunities.

Strategy: Increase student learning time. The third strategy these principals discussed that changed school structures involved increasing students' learning time. This took diverse forms, from reducing transitions during the school day to increasing attendance, and from reducing out-of-school discipline to reducing dropouts. These principals saw this work as central to increasing learning for their most marginalized students.

Principal Meg related a story about her elementary school's restructuring. After eliminating its pullout services for ELL, Title I, and talented and gifted, she described, "All those transitions with students coming and going, all this time where students were walking to their 'pullout' programs, all of those disruptions were eliminated. The kids had more continuity in their day; they had more time on task." Principal Meg believed that there were many benefits to eliminating the pullout services; one such benefit was that students receiving special services did not have so much wasted time walking to and from pullout classrooms, and so much disrupted time trying to transition between environments that frequently led to behavior issues. In reducing that time used for transition and disruption, more learning time could be created for students. Because schools were stretched for time to deliver instruction and develop

positive social and emotional relationships and skills, creating more coherent time in school allowed for teachers to be better positioned to accomplish such goals.

Principal Dale sought to increase middle school student learning time in two ways. First, he discussed the relationship he saw between learning time increasing and suspensions decreasing. "Over the 7 years I have been here, we have had a 20 to 30% reduction in suspensions." Principal Dale stated "this data means" that some of his "most needy students remained in school more days instead of being sent home." Principal Dale said that this happened because "we moved from a 'send the disruptive kids out of class and send them home' model to a much more relationship-based, process-oriented model. We needed to move away from a criminalization of our students to learning to see behavior as communication." Principal Dale articulated that how discipline is handled and viewed has an important impact on students' time in school and the amount of learning time. The view of students as "criminals" necessitates punishment and removal, whereas the view of students as citizens in process necessitates engagement, relationships, and active learning time.

These principals' experiences suggested that an important aspect of socially just schools is a commitment to providing each child the right to the maximum amount of instructional time. The literature on leadership for social justice does not focus specifically on increasing the amount of learning time. However, literature on literacy (Cunningham & Allington, 1994; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 1999) and science and math (Burns, 1999; Schmidt, 1997) demonstrated the need for ample time during the school day for students to learn and apply skills. Hart and Bredeson (1996) argued that to increase student achievement, principals need to protect, maintain, and champion teaching and learning time. By increasing the learning time in their schools for marginalized students, these principals put into practice what the literature described as essential for high levels of student learning.

Strategy: Increase accountability for achievement of all students. The fourth strategy that the principals invoked to change unjust structures involved collecting and analyzing data to understand the academic performance of every student. Principal Natalie discussed the state of accountability and collection of information when she arrived at her high school as principal:

> Data wasn't kept before I got here. . . . Now we keep all kinds of data that we use to inform our decision-making. . . . [We keep] the percentage [of students] that have been accepted to and plan on attending post-secondary . . . the percent of special

education students . . . composite ACT scores . . . suspension data
. . . AOD data … and achievement data.

Principal Natalie took an additional approach to accountability in terms of student achievement. Until she arrived, she stated, "we'd never done a graduate survey . . . I did a graduate survey and we got a lot of information from our graduates." She initiated an ongoing survey of the school's graduates, compiled these data, and used the information to drive planning:

> We needed to be more accountable to our students and their future after they leave us. Our graduate survey gives us information about areas of strength and areas needing change. . . . Students indicated they felt connected to some of their teachers but not challenged enough, and a number of students who were in college shared they did not have the same college preparation classes that their peers in college did.

Seeking out and using these data provided authentic accountability to the principal and staff for their students. This was not mandated accountability but locally decided information that provided feedback to guide schoolwide planning.

Principal Scott used achievement data to inform numerous conversations throughout the middle school. One example he cited entailed using data during difficult conversations with staff members. Principal Scott narrated thus: "I spoke with the teacher and brought up the fact that this teacher failed the most African American students in the entire school district. I had the data to show this, so we were able to have serious conversations about this serious issue." Principal Scott stated that he felt that using these data helped him to ground this and other important conversations in the achievement of marginalized students. To Principal Scott, this was an authentic use of data to discuss equity and justice-embedded issues. Using data about the day-to-day experiences in his school was one way to bring issues of social justice (race, in this case) into ongoing conversations.

Although accountability is presently a politically charged concept, these principals did not use accountability in a punitive sense. They demonstrated a commitment to understanding the realities of their schools and used data to help build that understanding for their teachers and for themselves. Their desire to have and use data allowed them to lead discussions and planning around specific realities of their students, and in particular, their students with the greatest needs. The literature on

leading for social justice supported this reality.

Riester, Pursch, and Skrla (2002) described how the principals and teachers in their study raised student achievement by using multiple forms of student data for a multitude of purposes. Scheurich (1998) shared that the principals and staff he studied shared this ongoing commitment to using data. Scheurich and Skrla (2003) argued,

> [data are] highly useful for developing equitable and excellent schools . . . we need a way to mark the student learning that we either are or are not accomplishing. In addition, when we have the kind of inequities by specific student groups, like racial groups, that we currently have, we need a way to mark those differences and to mark the erasure of those differences. (pp. 64–65)

Skrla et al. (2004) affirmed the use of data to understand where inequities in teacher quality, programs, and achievement exist. Results of the present study parallel this work; there was a commitment by the principals whom Skrla et al. studied, and by the principals in this study, to collect and use data to help improve the learning and climate of the schools in a more equitable direction.

The principals described four strategies to disrupt the unjust structures that marginalize, segregate, and impede achievement. They felt that these strategies created structural improvements that made their schools more just and contributed to improved student achievement. These changes are distinct from traditional school improvement in that these principals led their schools to change historically inequitable practices that had kept marginalized students in separate rooms where they received an inferior curriculum, where significant time was not being used for learning, and where they did not have the skills to take action on their own behalf. As included within the discussion of each strategy, there is literature that supports these strategies. However, combining these strategies is not typical of school improvement efforts (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Schmoker, 1999, 2006). These principals broke the silence by both narrating their strategies that hold promise for creating dramatic changes and centering their leadership on this broader understanding of inclusion, both of which had a significant impact on marginalized students and their learning. Another mechanism used for improving student learning by these leaders was to disrupt what they saw as the deprofessionalization of their teaching staff.

INJUSTICE 2: DEPROFESSIONALIZED TEACHING STAFF

The second injustice that principals worked to disrupt was a deprofessionalized teaching staff. They described two separate components of deprofessionalized teachers. First, these principals reported that their teaching staff, in general, did not possess the skills or will to reach every child. Second, when they arrived as principals in their schools, they felt that too many of the teachers had been previously treated as incompetent and not as respected professionals. The principals narrated that they worked to professionalize their teachers by building staff capacity, recentering staff learning on equity and justice issues, and creating a climate that respected, appreciated, and empowered teaching professionals. They narrated four primary strategies used in their efforts to professionalize their teaching staff: (a) address issues of race, (b) provide ongoing staff development focused on building equity, (c) hire and supervise for justice, and (d) empower staff. Again, examples of these strategies follow.

Strategy: Address issues of race. The first strategy that these principals used to confront the injustice of a deprofessionalized teaching staff involved addressing issues of race. All 6 principals spent ongoing time with their staff discussing and learning about race. They conveyed a similar sentiment shared by Principal Taylor: "Engaging a predominantly White staff in serious, ongoing investigation of race is essential to building our ability to correct the racial injustices perpetuated daily in schools across this country." This involved informal and formal ongoing components. Principal Taylor described how this looked at her elementary school: "Every staff meeting, a large chunk of time is now devoted to talking about race and equity issues." All 6 principals led whole-staff conversations that examined personal beliefs and experience with race. Engaging predominantly White staff in discussing race was a key strategy to create teaching staff who moved beyond tolerance, beyond an understanding that the race does not matter, to a place that valued diversity and examined the impact of race in the lives of everyone at school.

These principals used a variety of strategies to engage their staff in thinking about race. Five led activities with their staff that examined Whiteness and White privilege. Three led ongoing race discussion groups for staff. Four facilitated book groups using a variety of sources, including "*Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*"; *Caucasia*; *Other People's Children*; *From Rage to Hope*; *No Excuses*; *Young Gifted and Black*; and *A White Teacher Talks About Race*. Two did this during staff meeting time so they could require the entire staff to participate.

Additionally, all 6 principals planned staff development and facilitated spontaneous conversations about incidents that involved race. These conversations and planned activities provided a forum for staff to wrestle with the language and issues of race. The principals shared that the ongoing efforts around race were meant to foster changes in attitudes and behavior that consciously or unconsciously contributed to institutional racism and White privilege.

In addressing teachers' discomfort and inexperience with speaking and learning about race, 5 of the principals set ground rules for these conversations. A number of commonalities were evident across the ground rules. They isolated race in an effort to focus conversation about race and racial issues because they felt that many staff members' discomfort with discussing race led them to want to talk about poverty. In addition, they foreshadowed discomfort and "nonclosure" (Singleton & Linton, 2006) as a way to set the stage and remind their largely White staff that these conversations and professional development were not going to produce, according to one principal, a "neat and tidy package of racial epiphany or get us to some racial promised land. That this was going to be on-going, messy, hard, and it wasn't going away." Finally, 3 of the principals used personal narratives and staff racial autobiographies as a way to keep race-based discussion and learning going and to make race and privilege personal, local, and immediate (Singleton & Linton).

Additionally, all the principals infused race into their conversations about school data, such as student achievement, discipline, enrollment, and special education. Principal Scott described an example of this at his middle school:

> A year and a half ago, there were no Black kids in foreign language who have a disability, and there are White kids [with disabilities] who are. Foreign language is one gatekeeper for college, so there are no Black kids with an LD or ED label that ought to go to college? . . . We talked about strategies for how to fight against this.

Principal Scott attempted to bring issues of race into the ongoing conversations and meetings throughout the school day. Although in one sense, this conversation was about getting kids on track for college, it was also about making race a part of the daily thinking and language of schools. Bringing a lens of race into the daily practice of schools served to bring the needs of students previously relegated to the margins to the center of the discussion and practice.

None of these principals had schoolwide initiatives that tackled race,

Whiteness, and privilege systematically with all students. However, by infusing race throughout their ongoing agendas and discussions, these principals reported that they saw a new level of racial understanding beginning to develop in their staff. The body of literature on leadership for social justice specifically illuminated this finding. Shields, Larocque, and Oberg (2002) and Rusch (2004) established that discussing and addressing issues of race is pivotal for schools in a diverse society. Shields et al. argued for establishing a community of difference, and that such a community necessitates addressing issues of race and "begins, not with an assumption of shared norms, beliefs and values, but with the need for respect, dialogue, and understanding" (p. 132). The principals in this study reported attempts to enact the challenge put forth by these scholars in their work toward greater equity and justice.

Strategy: Provide ongoing staff development focused on building equity. The second strategy that these principals used to reprofessionalize their teachers involved providing ongoing staff development on equity gaps or equity concerns. These opportunities potentially provided their staff with greater skills to improve the curriculum and instruction for all students, and in particular, for traditionally marginalized students. Although they each offered different kinds of learning opportunities, they all focused their staff development on aspects of the school with equity deficits.

Principals Natalie, Taylor, and Meg all shared that they identified ELLs as an underserved population in their schools. Principal Meg arranged for a local university professor to offer classes that would lead toward English as a second language (ESL) teacher certification at her elementary school. In the restructuring described previously at Principal Meg's school, the new small-class-size model relied on dually certified teachers across general education and ESL. Principal Meg described this: "For our restructuring we were going to use our ESL allocation [as well as other allocation] to drive down class size. This meant that I needed dually certified classroom teachers who could serve both roles at the same time." This required certifying numerous teachers across the school in ESL. She continued,

> We offered the ESL classes and got a [comprehensive school reform] grant to help offset the expenses for teachers wanting university credit for certification. While within a year or so, I had 8–9 teachers dually certified, over 25 staff took part in these courses—everyone from the evening custodian, to the office manager, from classroom teachers to art teachers, from [teaching] assistants to me.

Principal Meg realized that in order to meet the needs of her students learning English by eliminating pullout and segregated programs, her staff needed greater knowledge and skills about how to work with ELLs. She described the way she sought to fill that gap through professional learning. This learning filled a key need that would provide better education for a particular group of marginalized students.

Numerous scholars (Darling-Hammond, 1992; Leithwood, 1994) agree with these principals that a necessary precursor to school improvement and success is professional learning. This learning is focused on improvement goals, and the school leader plays a major role in setting the course and tone for the school to continue learning. The principals in this study followed those recommendations by arranging and facilitating focused professional learning for their staff. Although this is not a new strategy to school improvement, it has proved to be imperative in increasing student learning, particularly for marginalized students.

What was distinct about the principals in this study was that they used their equity and social justice agendas to inform and guide the professional development. Equity deficits, not just the need to learn and use best practice that most school improvement embraces, drove the professional development. Skrla et al. (2004) suggested using formal equity audits to determine where improvement in equity is needed and then to address those areas. These principals, although not purposefully using such a tool, followed the ideas that these scholars discussed on equitable leadership. Additionally, the principals also saw that they advanced their social justice agendas through hiring and supervision.

Strategy: Hire and supervise for justice. The third strategy that these principals discussed using to disrupt injustice around deprofessionalization was to build staff capacity through hiring and supervising. These principals felt that bringing in the right people when staff openings arose helped build momentum in the direction they were leading the school. They discussed their belief that hiring was one important strategy to build a critical mass of staff who shared similar beliefs about the principal's social justice agenda. Principal Meg discussed her use of hiring as a way to bring staff into her elementary school who possessed an inclusive philosophy and who had experience, enthusiasm, and skills around issues of race and multicultural communities. Principal Meg shared, "When you put in the time and energy to finding the right people, it makes a huge difference because they share a commitment to the social justice and the inclusive direction we are going. Even one person can have a huge impact."

According to Principal Meg, an effective strategy was to "require all new classroom teachers to be dually certified, elementary and ESL. This

fits with our inclusive ESL model and it means teachers come in with a great range of skills." She felt that not only did this bring in a wider breath of skills, but it also kept people away who were not interested in the inclusive nature of their restructuring. This was one way to build a mass of teachers who were interested in being, and had the skills to be, the kind of teaching professional Principal Meg felt she needed. These principals positioned hiring and putting in time and energy into hiring as an important part of how to move forward in creating an overall staff committed to the vision of equity and justice.

Although hiring did not necessarily give existing staff new skills, the momentum that hiring created helped move the staff in a particular direction and in doing so increased the capacity of the entire staff to enact justice. As the principals hired people who shared a similar vision, these new staff members worked with their colleagues and shared new skills and ideas that also built staff capacity. This directly affected how these principals approached supervision.

The supervision that these principals enacted took two basic forms that moved the school in the direction of justice. First, these principals valued and trusted their staff. This resulted in the principals treating staff as professionals and not micro-managing their work. Second, these principals, according to their own words, were "aggressive" and "came down hard" when they found staff members who were failing to provide an equitable education to all students.

In speaking about supervising, Principal Meg shared, "I search for ways to support the people who are doing great things. I try to make it easier on my teachers who are so invested in our toughest kids."

She also discussed times when she had to come down hard on staff who could not seem to reach all students effectively. Principal Meg shared times when she monitored specific teachers' performance, organization, and curriculum when she found that marginalized student behavior and learning needs were not being addressed. She stated,

> I spent an enormous amount of time with [Mark] . . . This teacher was popular with many families, but the Latino and Black students were never engaged, they were not engaged in reading, they were allowed to wander around. . . . We had weekly or biweekly meetings about his planning. I connected him formally with a couple of mentors and outstanding teachers. I provided time for him to meet with, observe, be observed, have instruction modeled, and get feedback from these positive mentors . . . and we saw solid improvement.

Principal Meg felt that she had to make time for this kind of supervision in order to achieve her vision of education for her marginalized students. She felt that it was a combination of being straightforward and blunt, and providing meaningful support.

Additionally, all 6 principals shared that their school staff did not represent the racial and ethnic diversity of their schools. Although it is a national reality that the vast majority of teachers are White and female, 3 of the principals discussed how they had made some headway in hiring a more diverse staff than they found when they arrived. Principal Scott described this: "I've doubled the number of Black staff members in the school, actually tripled, seeing how there were two African American staff members in the school when I arrived and there are six now." He admitted that this was only one component of improving the middle school— an important one, but not the magic bullet.

The literature on leading for equity and social justice provides empirical evidence that marginalized students have teachers who are comparatively less skilled and less qualified (Skrla et al., 2004; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar; 2001); the principals in this study worked to change that reality in their schools. Although Scheurich and Skrla (2003) discussed the importance of high expectations, respect, culturally responsive teaching, loving and caring in the classroom, collaborative teaching environments, and continual development of content expertise, they center this discussion largely on professional development and do not directly address either hiring or supervision. However, a growing body of research supports the notion that teacher quality has a dramatic impact on students' learning and improving student outcomes (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Pressley et al., 2001). The principals in this study championed this belief through their hiring and supervision practices.

Strategy: Empower staff. The fourth strategy that the principals narrated about reprofessionalizing their teachers focused on empowering staff. These principals were purposeful that staff empowerment was a specific accomplishment in terms of advancing justice. This notion of empowerment was complex in that although these principals worked with staff in a democratic manner, including sharing decision-making and developing a culture of trust and professional respect, they also maintained a strong vision and control of the big-picture agenda. Empowering staff was a social justice goal for these principals because they held convictions about treating teachers and other staff members as skilled professionals. They maintained their own strong visions, they worked to build staff capacity and investment in their social justice aims, and they were adamant about empowering and respecting their staff members.

The principals discussed implementing shared decision-making struc-

tures that created teams of staff to impact the direction and operation of the school. Principal Taylor discussed her commitment to the empowerment of her elementary teachers. She led a school that had a group of "aggressive, organized, and politically savvy parents." She worked relentlessly to "protect" her teachers and "their ability to make the professional decisions," which she felt was their right:

> As the fourth- and fifth grade-teacher discussed detracking their math program, I knew this would be a very contentious change. . . . My staff made the decision. I was involved in the conversation, but ultimately they made the decision . . . I felt this change, detracking math, in order to be successful, needed to be a decision that professional teachers made, not a decision that I could make alone.

Principal Taylor talked about her conviction that this decision certainly should not be made by what she described as a loud group of "privileged and entitled parents":

> There was this aggressive group of parents, mostly affluent with a feeling of entitlement. They did not like the detracked math program. They yelled and screamed and we had lots of meetings. While I value their ideas and we continue to work together, the curricular decisions of my school are the responsibility of the trained and skilled teachers who know this stuff day in and day out. These teachers made this decision in the best interest of all kids, not just the privileged ones.

Regarding keeping the professional decisions for her teachers protected from the privileged group of parents, she concluded that it is about "drawing the line." On one hand, Principal Taylor and the other principals brought strong visions about what equity and justice could look like at their schools, but they also showed that a key component of creating a more just and equitable school was to have empowered teachers making important decisions.

In looking to the literature on leadership for equity and social justice, Riester et al. (2002) and Maynes and Sarbit (2000) described empowering staff as a key feature of creating more socially just schools. Because the principals in this study believed in their staff, they worked relentlessly to give them a professional voice in their school. This empowerment reflected what the growing body of literature on leadership for social justice supported, in that staff empowerment was a lived priority.

In sum, strong connections were made across the strategies— addressing race, providing staff development, hiring and supervising, and empowering staff—that led to more just schools. These principals talked about the essential nature of building a quality and empowered staff that took responsibility for the learning of every child, and in particular, the children who struggle the most. The leaders in this study combined a commitment to their staff with a fervent and unwavering vision of justice for the school. They neither led through top-down management style nor accepted a compromised vision while collaborating with staff. Both the autocratic style and a shared decision-making style—in which everything, including the vision of the school, is decided collectively—are popular methods for school reform. In breaking the silence about this social justice leadership, these principals simultaneously rejected the top-down and the everything-up-for-discussion styles. A passionate spirit, a deep commitment to justice, and a style of arrogant humility characterized their leadership (Theoharis, 2008b). They had in common that they saw these strategies as key to disrupting the deprofessionalization of their teachers. They not only believed that these advancements with their staff created better teachers and other professionals but also began to build the foundation for changing school culture and community.

INJUSTICE 3: UNWELCOMING SCHOOL CLIMATE, PARTICULARLY FOR MARGINALIZED FAMILIES AND THE COMMUNITY

The third way in which principals advanced social justice involved disrupting the unwelcoming school climate that created a disconnect between the school and the community and marginalized families. To accomplish this, these principals discussed invoking three strategies: (a) create a warm and welcoming climate, (b) reach out intentionally to the community and marginalized families, and (c) incorporate social responsibility into the school curriculum. I provide examples for each next.

Strategy: Create a warm and welcoming climate. These principals described disrupting the disconnect between the school and marginalized families by creating a warm and welcoming climate. Principal Dale discussed changing the way that school personnel greeted families at their middle school to convey a sense of respect. He stated,

> [When I began as principal,] I saw many parents were not greeted warmly and parents were treated in infantilizing ways. The way the school welcomes parents can make a big difference. So I addressed how we needed to greet all parents and visitors . . . this small step made a big difference. I can hear the difference,

but more importantly, visitors comment on that difference.

Principal Dale helped frame respect and graciousness as key aspects of the tone that needed to be used by school staff when they interacted with all families. This framing also translated to how students were seen and treated. He explained that the school had a reputation for being a "wild place," but that reputation changed, and parents' complaints about safety and order significantly decreased. Principal Dale stated,

> [The change came because] kids feel a strong sense of commu-nity . . . I worked with staff to shift the focus at school from one of discipline and control to focusing on building relationships . . . seven years ago most special ed kids were in segregated classes and they were not part of the schoolwide discipline system, but now students with disabilities are included in classes and in our data, and even with that change, suspension and behavior refer-rals were reduced by 20 to 30%.

Principal Dale was convinced that by focusing on relationships with stu-dents, the climate changed. He shared that police calls for behavior dropped by "60 to 70%." These changes, in combination with increased student achievement and academic rigor, reflected a less punitive and more accepting climate rather than, in his words, a "police state mental-ity that was prevalent here before."

Principal Taylor shared a similar philosophy with the other principals in that relationships with staff, students, and parents helped to transform the elementary school climate. She discussed how she also focused staff members to invest themselves in getting to know students. She reported, "I instituted weekly recognition of students. Each teacher nominated a number of students each week for individual accomplishments, with the goal of every student being recognized multiple times a year. I gave out thousands of individual awards, and the kids and staff loved it." This was really about creating a system to acknowledge each student, honoring all students' strengths, and findings ways to appreciate students who histori-cally would not have been recognized:

> I tried to establish norms for staff to appreciate each other. One way was to create time at staff meetings for staff to appreciate each other. Sometimes we did this in writing because then more people felt comfortable and more people were recognized. In 3 years we did hundreds and hundreds of written and verbal appreciations.

Principal Taylor also talked about what she considered "small steps" that ultimately change the climate. This was not about creating a recipe for building a positive culture, but rather implementing small changes that reinforced the values of these principals' visions of equity and social justice.

Because the definition of leadership for social justice used in this study centers on keeping marginalized students at the heart of the vision and practice, creating schools where these students felt connected, where they felt valued, and that they enjoyed attending positioned these specific efforts as social justice advancements. Building strong relationships and creating a place where people are valued was a critical aspect across the schools. In improving their school climates, these principals also reached out purposefully to marginalized families and the local community.

Hart and Bredeson (1996) and Deal and Peterson (1990) described the importance of the principal creating a positive school climate. They argued that this climate was a necessary component to school improvement and increased academic learning of students. Scheurich (1998) found that building a child-centered culture of love, care, appreciation, and respect for both marginalized children and their families is central and that this culture is imperative for diverse schools to create just environments that achieve high levels of student learning. The principals in this study also sought, and achieved, a similar goal discussed in the literature by creating a warm and welcoming climate. Additionally, they made concerted efforts to involve the diverse community in their schools.

Strategy: Reach out to marginalized families and the community. The second strategy these principals used took the form of specifically and purposefully reaching out to marginalized families and community agencies. These principals discussed how involving the community and specifically reaching out to certain families made a difference in creating a more just school.

One way was to make time to call, visit, and develop relationships with marginalized families. For example, in response to family requests, Principal Meg shared that she and her staff started ethnic parent meetings. Throughout the year, they facilitated meetings for Hmong parents, Latino parents, and parents of African American students. According to Principal Meg, these forums "built community . . . strengthened connections between traditionally marginalized groups and our elementary school," and gave families both "information and a voice in their children's school." Some people disagreed with the idea of separate meetings for different ethnic groups and used the position that this structure is "exclusive" and "segregating" and does not align with the inclusive school reforms; however, Minow (1990) argued that the efforts of Principal Meg

and her staff aligned with a broader understanding and spirit of inclusion, in that diverse families can attain more meaningful access to school and benefit from school involvement when the schools find ways to connect with and listen to them. The result was that hundreds of families were involved at the school who were not before.

As with Principal Meg, the other 5 principals shared the need and ongoing efforts to build relationships with marginalized families. Principal Taylor discussed that she "always set extra time aside to invite families" not traditionally vocal in her school and worked to "organize families to give input about heated issues who are often left out of the conversation by more privileged parents." In terms of high school, Principal Eli described,

> I need to be seen in the neighborhoods, out of school. Families who we had not connected with in the past have responded to positive friendly informal contact whether it is by walking students home and chatting with families or attending neighborhood events to purely build relationships. I have been able to meet more families and hear concerns that we had not heard before.

Principal Dale said that as he worked on the ways that families were greeted at the secondary level, he needed to be explicit with particular staff about how they addressed families and model respectful conversations. He shared an example:

> I worked with Mike [a teacher] who called home about a student's inappropriate behavior. Mike reported raising his voice and telling the kid's mom that "she needed to take responsibility" for the child's behavior. This made the mom very angry, and later that day she stormed into Mike's office and then into my office to complain about how she was being treated. . . . This provided an opportunity to work with Mike. We talked about and even tried out some ways to handle these conversations in the future. I invited him to sit in on when I called a potentially volatile family about a behavior issue so he could see how I wanted him to be respectful . . . the fact of the matter was in many ways the school staff was turning certain families off to school by the disrespect we showed them in our conversations. But, that was changeable.

These principals led outreach to connect their schools to families and

neighborhoods that traditionally felt marginalized. These leaders made time to involve families in new ways, and they used these ways and developed ongoing mechanisms for listening and hearing from these families. In many ways, these leaders reframed how marginalized families were seen and respected at school.

In addition, these leaders sought to connect with the community agencies. At the high school, Principal Natalie said, they "created partnerships with community agencies working on AOD [alcohol and other drug] issues. This provided a more seamless way to facilitate holistic services for our students." The principals discussed that they knew the school could not meet all the needs of the children for whom they were responsible but saw a lack of connection among services for children and families. They discussed that they needed to make connections with community organizations and community providers because there were services available in their cities. They felt that what was lacking was a connection between the services and a way to connect students with services, and they needed to reach out or their students would "continue to suffer."

Building a stronger base of support for both the schools and the families helped ease the disconnect between the school and a marginalized community. For these principals, reaching out to the community and marginalized families was not rhetoric about community engagement, or a distant understanding of "sub publics." It was about creating schools that include, value, and find ways to support families who traditionally have been marginalized by schools and society. Moving these families and their needs from the margin to the center fit with the definition of social justice for this study, and by initiating projects and embodying attitudes that transformed their schools and community climates, these principals made significant advances.

The literature on leadership for equity and justice provided a number of insights into reaching out to the community and marginalized families. Scheurich (1998) offered,

> These schools have created many different but creative ways to interweave the school and community, to create what Estes (1994) has called "the high performance learning community" (p. 28). But "this does not mean [that these schools are] resocializing [for instance] African-American parents to White middle-class ways" (Hollins & Spencer, 1990, p. 93); instead, these schools experience themselves as being in union with the community–the community's needs and dreams are their needs and dreams, and vice versa. (p. 466)

Goldfarb and Grinberg (2002) concluded that community ownership and connection are essential components to a successful organization striving for social justice. The principals in this study carried out the mission that Scheurich as well as Goldfarb and Grinberg put forth.

Strategy: Incorporate social responsibility into the school curriculum. The final strategy that these principals described using to overcome the disconnect between a marginalized community and school took the form of incorporating social responsibility into the curriculum. The principals related that their schools emphasized involvement in the community to improve student learning. Principal Eli described designing the school mission and "lessons that really connect with the community, to see how what they've learned in the classroom can impact the community." Principal Eli gave a high school example:

> Kids as a part of their curriculum are doing various projects in which they're studying the community and what it doesn't have in order to come up with either businesses or non-profits or collaborative ventures that fill the gaps . . . to understand what works or doesn't work so that they can have a positive impact on their neighborhood. . . . They'll do collective action, not just be an individual.

He stated that both students and faculty were embracing and discussing ideas of collective action during informal conversations, official school meetings, and courses (e.g., student involvement in studying and engaging in community organizing, class lessons about social movements or grassroots organizing).

Principal Natalie discussed the idea of what she called "restorative justice" as a major component instituted into their high school. She shared that students were taught to mediate and deal with violations of the school's code of conduct and that "every day was a new day." With the new day came an expectation, and what she believed was "a chance to repair any damage that happened." Principal Natalie also described courses designed to connect students to communities to create meaningful learning but also to reinforce a connection to something larger than oneself. She described an example:

> We tried to offer more of these types of classes. . . . There is a community in Mississippi, settled by African American individuals before the Civil War and then they kept the community until now, which was holy hell during that time of extreme violence. . . . Our kids have gone down there and they have helped document their

> history because a lot of their elders are passing away and they
> want a documentation of their history.

In both of these examples, principals sought to establish norms in their school to include teaching social responsibility. Although incorporating service and social responsibility in the curriculum started as additional pieces to the yearly schedule, both were eventually integrated into an ongoing curriculum plan.

A critical component to creating socially just classrooms and schools was teaching students the skills and responsibilities to create their own social change (Ayers, Hunt, & Quinn, 1998; Freire, 1990; Purpel, 1989). By developing community activism and social responsibility, the principals in this study led beyond equal access for marginalized students to establish an emancipatory and action-oriented pedagogy for their schools. This resonated with what Ayes et al., Freire, and Purpel called for in creating socially just classrooms and made significant and meaningful connections to the community. The social action that the principals in this study advanced was also seen in the literature on leadership in Brown's (2004) call for "activist action plans" to be incorporated into administrator training as a means of ingraining agency and social responsibility into future principals. However, instilling the sense of responsibility to create emancipatory education and teaching the skills to take social action are neither a part of traditional administrator preparation nor central to the literature on leadership for social justice.

The principals in this study narrated that they worked to create more just schools by creating a warm and welcoming climate, reaching out and valuing the community and marginalized families, and by infusing social responsibility into the curriculum. These leaders appeared to move beyond lip service about climate and diversity to building a school culture that embraces diversity and connecting in meaningful ways with the community. They shared ways in which they worked to bridge the school–community divide and in doing so demonstrated that school administration has the responsibility to bridge that divide and is capable of doing so. By taking the stance that their schools needed to honor and respect all families, and in particular, marginalized families, they moved beyond a condescending or infantilizing view of disconnected families and helped their staff members move in this direction as well. These strategies were used to transform their schools into welcoming places where marginalized families were valued and connected to the education of their children.

INJUSTICE 4: DISPARATE AND LOW STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

All the principals felt that raising student achievement, particularly the achievement of traditionally marginalized students, needed to be the core of making their school more just. Five of the 6 principals described improvements in academic achievement during their tenure at the schools.[5] The sixth principal, in the first year at his school, emphasized the areas needed for improvement, but in reality, there had not been much time to see any significant change in achievement.

Although this is a significant injustice, and perhaps the greatest injustice they felt they worked to disrupt, the principals did not share a list of strategies to accomplish this goal. Instead, they saw their commitment to the achievement of marginalized students, as one principal described, as "permeating everything I did, every decision I made, every conversation I had, and every part of my leadership." To that regard, all the strategies they invoked from the first three injustices discussed in this article were positioned as the ways in which they credited the improvements in achievement. Four examples of the kinds of raises in student achievement that these principals realized during their tenure follow.

Principal Eli discussed the quick improvements he saw in terms of high school student achievement and how those improvements were central to his mission. On state tests, Eli's students improved from 15% of the students achieving at the grade-level norms to 45% over a 3-year period. Low-income and students of color showed these exact gains. Principal Eli showed a mix of pride and dissatisfaction when discussing this piece of data; he said that although it was "significant improvement, many students still seriously struggled."

Principal Dale also believed that student achievement was central to all his work advancing social justice. The state department of education named his middle school for the past 3 years a Promise School of Recognition. Principal Dale reported that the school was given this award because the school was in the top quartile of the state in terms of percentage of students who receive free/reduced lunch and demonstrate above-average student academic performance in reading and mathematics for all students and student groups.

Principal Dale shared that over the past 5 years under his leadership, reading and math achievement rose from "around 65% of students achieving proficient or advanced to 84%." He also shared that over that time, science and social studies achievement remained fairly steady. He stated that when he started as principal at his school, only "78% of the students were being tested, and now 98% are. More students are taking the tests, which would make you think that our percentages of students

achieving proficient or advanced would decrease. But the numbers of students doing well has grown across all subjects." When disaggregating the data by race, income, and ability, students of color, students from low-income families, and students with disabilities showed the most growth.

Principal Meg proudly discussed achievement gains for her elementary students after their school restructuring. She started by saying that the White middle-income students traditionally scored well on most local and state assessments because of the school's location in a large upper-middle class university community. She said that there was significant room for improvement for her students of color and students learning English. When Principal Meg started at her school, none of the students learning English took the third-grade state-mandated reading test because it was assumed that they would not pass. After restructuring and testing every student on district assessments and nearly everyone on state tests, Principal Meg reported,

> We had over a 90% pass rate for our Latino students on the third-grade reading test with only one student not taking the test, which was very much higher than the district and higher than the state for that particular group of kids. We had always scored high for our White university kids, but now our students of color and students learning English are excelling too.

Principal Meg discussed that her "African American students are higher than district peers," meaning that they consistently outperform district norms and averages in the primary grades on district assessments. She also shared the need she felt to make even more improvements for her African American, Latino, and Hmong students. She stated, "We're doing better, we're more accountable, we have better data, but we need to do more for some of our Black and Brown kids."

Principal Natalie shared different types of student achievement data from the other principals. She explained that no data were kept on measures of achievement before she started at her high school. All the data reported reflects data that she has kept, starting in her first year. She discussed that previously, about 15% of the students failed their classes at school, but that had improved to only 7% failing. She said, " [the] critics could claim we have lowered our standards, the opposite is actually true. We are expecting much more academically from our kids."

Principal Natalie explained that now 79% of her students go to college, whereas only 68% did when she arrived. The most complicated statistic she shared was that the ACT composite score for her students has

remained at 23. Seen in conjunction with a rise in students attending postsecondary institutions, a rise in students taking the ACT, a dramatic increase in students with disabilities (from 3% to 23%), and a change from 11% students of color to 34%, "this maintenance of the ACT composite score signifies that more marginalized students are not only taking the ACT, but are achieving more success."

In comparing these advances to the literature on leading for social justice, these findings about raising student achievement parallel what Riester et al. (2002) and Scheurich (1998) found. Both Riester et al. and Scheurich studied schools where marginalized students performed at high academic levels. Scheurich stated that students at these schools achieved at levels "placing them in direct academic competition with what are considered the better Anglo-dominated schools" (p. 452). This was also true of the principals' schools in this study. Although not every school or particular demographic group in each school in this study was outperforming students in affluent and privileged schools, the gains in student achievement are significant. Some students from marginalized backgrounds in this study were outperforming or matching their more privileged peers, and the achievement trajectory for others was promising. This finding supports what the literature has shown is possible for schools serving students from marginalized groups.

Raising student achievement is a goal for many school administrators, and achieving this goal is not, in and of itself, social justice work. Among the schools in this study, dramatic academic gains were seen for marginalized students. Whereas many high-performing schools or high-performing districts struggle with disparate achievement for marginalized students, the gains at the schools in this study and the schools' ability to raise student achievement levels clearly make this distinct from traditional school improvement and centers this advancement as social justice work. This was breaking the silence (Fine, 1994), in that although these leaders were critical of standardized testing measures, they were adamant that the marginalized students at their school could and would be successful. All 6 principals shared a similar perspective that the push for testing was ultimately going to harm schools and marginalized students, yet they had what they referred to as a "moral obligation" to ensure that their marginalized students were successful on the tests. They sought to do that through authentic and engaging teaching and learning, not test prep or skill and drill. Their position on this was paradoxical in terms of how it positioned testing accountability as what one principal called "an evil" but also "a moral duty to keep track of students."

DISCUSSION

As I visited each of these schools, many of the strategies these principals recounted and the changes that resulted were evident. Understanding these leaders' perspectives on the strategies they used in their efforts to create more socially just schools provided a key vantage point in wrestling with the contested space of leadership in relation to social justice and schools.

The strategies these principals employed were central to social justice work in that they challenge the historic and present-day marginalization of specific groups of students and families, as well as the ways in which schools are run and teachers are perceived. Challenging these injustices was characteristic of social justice principals in a number of ways. First, the principals saw raising the achievement of all students, particularly marginalized students, as central to their social justice work. This commitment to closing the achievement gap for students marginalized because of their race, class, gender, disability, or language centered and drove their work.

In addition, these principals articulated a moral commitment to creating inclusive schools by eliminating separate/pullout/segregated programs, which is not often a strategy employed by many leaders committed to school improvement. Too often, the proposed solution to assisting struggling students is the creation and proliferation of remedial, special, and targeted programs. These principals approached addressing the needs of these students in an entirely different manner—inclusion, and supported access to the general education, or what one principal called "the good stuff."

In addition, although tackling a deprofessionalized teaching staff through building staff capacity is a strategy emphasized by many who are engaged in school improvement, the principals in this study recentered skills and orientation specifically on equity and justice. Their actions in these areas included equity-focused professional development that addressed issues of race, hiring, and supervising purposefully to create a critical commitment to social justice. The principals combined this with the dedication to create more democratic and empowering norms for staff. This approach made social justice advancement clearly distinct from traditional staff development or staff empowerment. Staff empowerment is not a concern unique to social justice leaders, however, these principals' commitments to empowerment of staff, combined with maintaining their own strong vision of equity and justice, make these advances distinct from typical school improvement efforts.

Additionally, whereas many schools attempt to build connections with

the local community, these principals' advances in strengthening school culture and community moved beyond the rhetoric of working with "sub-publics" discussed in traditional school/community relations. This strategy was distinctly oriented toward social justice in that these principals intentionally reached out and built connections with families and communities that had not had a voice in their schools. These principals challenged deficit models of viewing students as they valued marginalized families as central members of the community, not charity cases or individuals to be tolerated.

Finally, the other strategies detailed in this article allowed for, supported, and enhanced the grounding of social justice in these schools. For example, staff development per se need not be a stand-alone social justice achievement. However, focused staff development that builds truly collaborative teams of specialists and replaces programs that segregate and thus compound marginalization places staff development as a central strategy in creating a more just school.

LESSONS FROM PRINCIPALS COMMITTED TO SOCIAL JUSTICE

A series of lessons salient for educators involved in both leadership practice and preparation emerged from this research. The first breaking-the-silence lesson from these principals that can be offered is the importance of believing that equity is possible. The leaders in this study and the advancements they led provide evidence and concrete examples that social justice in schools is more than rhetoric; indeed it *can* be achieved. This viewpoint counters the liberal dogma that society's failings and poverty are too overwhelming for schools to educate all students to a similar level. In addition, it counters the conservative mantra that public schools are failing underserved populations and that programs like vouchers and a reliance on the market and sanctions are needed to fix schools, or the view by some administrators that equity and justice are really not possible. With that belief that equity was possible was, as one principal described it, "a sense of never being satisfied" and a "deep commitment to always looking to improve." This positioned the socially just school not as a static target that was ultimately achieved, but, as another one of the principals in this study saw it, "a belief that we can do better for our marginalized students, changing the present-day realities to move there, and a constant effort to recognize that we must always reexamine our progress." Examples of the successes of these principals provide important models of what can happen in schools for marginalized students and of the need to be restless with present-day accomplishments, grounding social justice not in theoretical terms but in actual schools

with real-life leaders.

Another lesson involves a key aspect of this study: Inclusive schooling is a necessary and enriching component to enacting justice. The principals in this study provided thoughtful examples of how every student (e.g., students with disabilities, ELL students, students of varying racial, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds) can and must be included in a rigorous and engaging general curriculum. These principals concluded not only that inclusion is a moral issue, but also that a collaboratively planned, differentiated curriculum and instruction can meet all students' needs when carried out in warm and welcoming schools and classrooms. This is a key lesson as schools across the country maintain structures that isolate, track, and segregate instead of structuring inclusion and belonging of all kinds. The findings of this study directly contradict many current practices and reforms that propose that the best ways for students with disabilities, students learning English, and other struggling students to learn involves individually designed and/or remedial instruction conducted outside the general classroom.

As an additional lesson, this study suggested that in order to enact social justice in public schools using a combination of staff development, hiring, and supervision, principals will also benefit by increasing staff capacity to carry out a comprehensive schoolwide agenda focused on equity and justice. The importance of staff development and professional learning is not new, but a focused plan in which all learning ties to larger equity and justice issues is far from the reality in many schools and districts.

Related to this is a lesson of trusting and empowering staff. The principals in this study provided vibrant examples of dynamic leadership relentlessly committed to their vision of justice and equity and who held high expectations for their staff to work to ensure equity, but who also did not micromanage. These leaders trusted, gave responsibility to, and relied on the professional decision making power of, their teachers. In combination, these implications call for leaders to embody the complicated mix of a passionate resolved commitment to a social justice vision, and sincere humility. This leadership mix simultaneously weaves a determined message of equity and justice into all aspects of the school, humbly admits mistakes, and relies on the professional judgment of others (Theoharis, 2008b). This almost paradoxical style of leadership brings together the power of visionary leadership and the impact of democracy in practice—a combination that scholars and practitioners have argued is central to real school reform.

The final lesson involves setting a tone and creating a climate that deeply respects and values the racial, cultural, and economic diversity

represented in many public schools. Building this school tone and climate required an ongoing commitment to building relationships family by family. This only happened by understanding (not judging) families' lives and beliefs, by committing to reaching out and listening to families, and by using persistent, diverse, and native language communication.

It was clear from these principals that this work brings resistance. These leaders developed their own resilience to maintain this difficult work. This resistance and the resulting resilience are essential aspects of needed future research to help further understand the realities of social justice leadership.

A FINAL WORD

Although the sample studied here represented but a small group of principals from a small number of urban schools, it provided good examples of real possibilities for improving the education of our most marginalized students. These leaders held onto the idealism that social justice in schools is a necessary ongoing struggle, and with that idealism, they achieved results. Their ability to find ways to meet individual needs in an inclusive, community-oriented manner and not only their commitment to access for all students but also their insistence on quality and breadth in programs redefine leadership. Their work to improve the quality of the teaching staff while placing tremendous trust and power in the hands of the professionals at their schools offers a refreshing model for others. Their ability to connect with diverse students, staff, families, and community members was perhaps central to the personalities of these 6 principals, but it was also a mark of their beliefs about community. They "broke the silence" and narrated how they worked to disrupt injustice. Within this work, they brought to life social justice leadership.

Notes

1.   Lopez (2001) operationally defined the term *marginalized* as being "often used to describe people, voices, perspectives, identities, and phenomena that have been left out or 'excluded' from the center of dominant society (Hudak, 1993)" (p. 417). In this article, I am using the term to describe individuals who have been labeled "outsiders"(Lopez) based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation, language, and ability/disability.

2.   Of the 18 originally suggested for participation, 1 did not respond to numerous contact attempts, 1 did not want to be considered, 4 were principals in charter schools (I wanted to include only traditional public schools, not charters), and 4 did not meet the third criterion mainly because they did not believe in the connection between inclusive services and social justice.

3.   See Theoharis (2008a) for a detailed analysis of the resistance that the principals faced.

4.   The social justice advancements that these principals made were briefly introduced in Theoharis (in press).

5.   All the achievement data the principals discussed were verified with their state educational agencies. However, in keeping with the spirit of allowing these leaders to narrate their experience, I will again use their voices to explain the achievement gains.

References

Ayers, W., Hunt, J. A., & Quinn, T. (Eds.). (1998). *Teaching for social justice.* New York: New Press and Teachers College Press.

Bell, D. (1993). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism.* Basic Books: New York.

Bell, D. (2004). *Silent covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the unfulfilled hopes for racial reform.* London: Oxford University Press.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. (1998). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods.* Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Bogotch, I. (2002). Educational leadership and social justice: Practice into theory. *Journal of School Leadership, 12,* 138–156.

Brown, K. M. (2004). Leadership for social justice and equity: Weaving a transformative framework and pedagogy. *Educational Administrative Quarterly, 40,* 79–110.

Burns, M. (1999). *Leading the way: Principals and superintendents look at math instruction.* Sausalito, CA: Math Solutions.

Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Connell, R. (1993). *Schools and social justice.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Conrad, C. F., Haworth, J. G., & Millar, S. B. (1993). A positioned subject approach to inquiry. In C. F. Conrad, J. G. Haworth, & L. R. Lattuca (Eds.), *Qualitative research in higher education: Expanding perspectives* (pp. 28–48). Boston: Pearson.

Crowson, R. L. (1993). Qualitative research methods in higher education. In C. Conrad, A. Neumann, J. G. Haworth, & P. Scott (Eds.), *Qualitative research in higher education: Experiencing alternative perspectives and approaches* (pp. 167–208). Needham Heights, MA: Ginn Press.

Cunningham, P., & Allington, R. (1994). *Classrooms that work: They can all read and write.* New York: Harper Collins.

Dantley, M. (2002). Uprooting and replacing positivism, the melting pot, multiculturalism, and other impotent notions in education leadership through an African American perspective. *Education and Urban Society, 34,* 334–352.

Dantley, M., & Tillman, L. (2006). Social justice and moral transformative leadership. In C. Marshall & M. Olivia (Eds.), *Leadership for social justice: Making revolutions happen* (pp. 16–29). Boston: Pearson.

Darling-Hammond, L. (with Scalan, E.). (1992). Policy and supervision. In *1992 ASCD Yearbook* (pp. 7–27). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1999). *Teacher quality and students achievement: A review of state policy evidence.* Seattle, WA: Center for Study of Teaching and Learning.

Deal, T. E., & Peterson, K. D. (1990). *The principal's role in shaping school culture.* Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Delgado, R., & Stafanic, E. (1999). *Critical race theory: The cutting edge*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Edmonds, R. (1979). Effective schools for the urban poor. *Educational Leadership, 2,* 15–23.

Fine, M. (1994). Dis-stance and other stances: Negotiations of power inside feminist research. In A. Gitlin (Ed.), *Power and method: Political activism and educational research* (pp. 13–35). London: Routledge.

Ford, B. (2008, March). *White "social justice" principals as "racists": Negotiating identity and developing strategies*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association annual meeting, New York, NY.

Frattura, E., & Capper, C. A. (2007). *Leading for social justice: Transforming schools for all learners*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Freire, P. (1990). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

Glaser, G. B., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.

Goldfarb, K. P., & Grinberg, J. (2002). Leadership for social justice: Authentic participation in the case of a community center in Caracas, Venezuela. *Journal of School Leadership, 12,* 157–173.

Hart, A. W., & Bredeson, P. V. (1996). *The principalship: A theory of professional learning and practice*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Larson, C., & Murtadha, K. (2002). Leadership for social justice. In J. Murphy (Ed.), *The educational leadership challenge: Redefining leadership for the 21st century* (pp. 134–161). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Leithwood, K. (1994, January). *Leadership for school restructuring*. An invited address to the International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement, Melbourne, Australia.

Lopez, G. R. (2001). The value of hard work: Lessons on parent involvement from an (Im)migrant household. *Harvard Educational Review, 71,* 416–437.

Lyman, L. L., & Villani, C. J. (2002). The complexity of poverty: A missing component of educational leadership programs. *Journal of School Leadership, 12,* 246–280.

Marshall, C., & Ward, M. (2004). "Yes, but. . . ": Education leaders discuss social justice. *Journal of School Leadership, 14,* 530–563.

Maynes, B., & Sarbit, B. (2000). Schooling children living in poverty: Perspectives on social justice. *Exceptionality Education Canada, 10*(1–2), 37–61.

Maxwell, J. A. (1998). Designing a qualitative study. In L. Bickman & D. J. Rog (Eds.), *Handbook of applied social research methods* (pp. 69–100). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Minow, M. (1990). *Making all the difference: Inclusion, exclusion, and American law*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Oakes, J. (1985). *Keeping track: How schools structure inequality*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Pressley, M., Wharton-McDonald, R., Allington, R., Block, C. C., Morrow, L., Tracey, D., et al. (2001). A study of effective first-grade literacy instruction. *Scientific Studies of Reading, 5,* 35–58.

Purpel, D. E. (1989). *The moral and spiritual crisis in education: A curriculum for justice and compassion in education*. New York: Bergin and Garvey.

Rapp, D. (2002). Social justice and the importance of rebellious imaginations. *Journal of School Leadership, 12,* 226–245.

Riester, A. F., Pursch, V., & Skrla, L. (2002). Principals for social justice: Leaders of school success for children from low-income homes. *Journal of School Leadership, 12,* 281–304.

Rusch, E. A. (2004). Gender and race in leadership preparation: A constrained discourse. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 40,* 16–48.

Scheurich, J. J. (1998). Highly successful and loving, public elementary schools populated mainly by low-SES children of color: Core beliefs and cultural characteristics. *Urban Education, 33,* 451–491.

Scheurich, J., & Skrla, L. (2003). *Leadership for equity and excellence: Creating high-achievement classrooms, schools, and districts.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Schmidt, W.H. (1997). *Third International Mathematics and Science Study.* East Lansing: Michigan State University.

Schmoker, M. (1999). *Results: The key to continuous school improvement* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Schmoker, M. (2006). *Results now: How we can achieve unprecedented improvements in teaching and learning.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Shields, C. M. (2004). Dialogic leadership for social justice: Overcoming pathologies of silence. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 40,* 111–134.

Shields, C. M., Larocque, L. J., & Oberg, S. L. (2002). A dialogue about race and ethnicity in education: Struggling to understand issues in cross-cultural leadership. *Journal of School Leadership, 12,* 116–137.

Singleton, G. E., & Linton, C. (2006). *Courageous conversations about race: A field guide for achieving equity in schools.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Skrla, L., Scheurich, J. J., Garcia, J., & Nolly, G. (2004). Equity audits: A practical leadership tool for developing equitable and excellent schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 40,* 135–163.

Taylor, B. M., Pearson, P. D., Clark, K., & Walpole, S. (1999). Beating the odds in teaching all children to read: Lessons from effective school and exemplary teachers. *Ready Reference for Reading Excellence.* Retrieved from University of Michigan School of Education, Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement Web site: http://www.ciera.org/library/instresrc/ready-reference/index.html

Theoharis, G. T. (2004). *At no small cost: Social justice leaders and their response to resistance.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Theoharis, G. (2007). Social justice educational leaders and resistance: Toward a theory of social justice leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 43,* 221–251.

Theoharis, G. (2008a). "At every turn": The resistance public school principals face in their pursuit of equity and justice. *Journal of School Leadership, 18,* 303–343.

Theoharis, G. (2008b). Woven in deeply: Identity and leadership of urban social justice principals. *Education and Urban Society, 41,* 3–25.

Theoharis, G. (2009). *The leadership our children deserve: Seven keys to equity, social justice, and school reform.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Theoharis, G. (in press). Sustaining social justice: Strategies urban principals develop to advance justice and equity while facing resistance. *International Journal of Urban Educational Leadership.*

Touchton, D., & Acker-Hocevar, M. (2001, November). *Using a lens of social justice to reframe principals' interviews from high poverty, low performing schools.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the University Council for Educational Administration, Cincinnati, OH.

Vibert, A., & Portelli, J. (2000). School leadership and critical practice in an elementary school. *Exceptionality Education Canada, 10* (1–2), 23–36.

GEORGE THEOHARIS is an assistant professor in educational leadership and inclusive education at Syracuse University. He is a former principal and early childhood/elementary teacher. His interests and research focus on issues of equity, justice, diversity, inclusion, leadership, and school reform. His recent publications include "Toward a Theory of Social Justice Leadership" (2007) in *Educational Administration Quarterly* and "Oppressors or Emancipators: Critical Dispositions for Preparing Inclusive School Leaders" (2008) in *Equity and Excellence in Education,* and his new book title *The School Leaders our Children Deserve: 7 Keys to equity, Social Justice and School Reform* (2009) by Teachers College Press.

Social Justice educational leaders and resistance: Towards a theory of social justice leadership. Educational Administration Quarterly, 43(2): 221–258. [CrossRef] [Google Scholar]. Theoharis, G. (2010). Disrupting injustice: Principals narrate the strategies they use to improve their schools and advance social justice. Teachers' College Record, 112(1): 331–37 [Google Scholar]. Current usage metrics. About article metrics. Return to article. Current usage metrics show cumulative count of Article Views (full-text article views including HTML views, PDF and ePub downloads, according to the availa Leading schools to promote social inclusion: Developing a conceptual framework for analyzing research, policy and practice. Journal of Education Policy, 23(4), 397–414.CrossRefGoogle Scholar. Reyes, F., Velez, W., & Pena, R. (1993). Â Disrupting injustice: Principals narrate the strategies they use to improve their schools and advance social justice. Teachers College Record, 112(1), 331–373.Google Scholar. Theoharis, G., & Causton-Theoharis, J. N. (2008).