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Educational Administration Quarterly 2007 43: 221
DOI: 10.1177/0013161X06293717

Educational Administration Quarterly
Vol. 43, No. 2 (April 2007) 221-258

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Purpose*: A subgroup of principals—leaders for social justice—guide their schools to transform the culture, curriculum, pedagogical practices, atmosphere, and schoolwide priorities to benefit marginalized students. The purpose of the article is to develop a theory of this social justice educational leadership.*
Research Design*: This empirical study examined the following questions: (a) In what ways are principals enacting social justice in public schools? (b) What resistance do social justice–driven principals face in their justice work? (c) What strategies do principals develop to sustain their ability to enact social justice in light of the resistance they face in public schools?*
Data Collection and Analysis*: A critical, qualitative, positioned-subject approach combined with principles of autoethnography guided the research methods. Seven public school leaders who came to the principalship with a social justice orientation, who make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically marginalizing factors central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision, and who have demonstrated success in making their schools more just, were studied through interviews.*
Findings: *A description of (a) how the principals enacted social justice, (b) the resistance they faced as well as the toll the resistance had on them, and (c) the strategies they developed to sustain their social justice work is provided in detail. Implications for administrator preparation are made at the close of this article.*

Keywords: *social justice; leadership; equity; principals; resistance*

The literature on leadership for social justice identifies schools that have demonstrated tremendous success not only with White, middle-class, and affluent students but also with students from varied racial, socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds (Capper & Young, in press; Maynes &

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Sarbit, 2000; Oakes, Quartz, Ryan, & Lipton, 2000; Riester, Pursch, & Skrla, 2002; Scheurich, 1998; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001). A recurring theme from these schools and from the literature on school change is that exemplary leadership helps point to the necessity for change and helps make the realities of change happen (Bell, Jones, & Johnson, 2002; Blackmore, 2002; Bogotch, 2002; Fullan, 1993; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002; Grogan, 2002a, 2002b; Lyman & Villani, 2002; Rapp, 2002; Riester et al., 2002; Solomon, 2002). This article seeks to enhance administrative practice and the understanding of social justice leadership.

Three aspects of this article make it distinct from the growing body of literature on leadership for social justice. First, this empirical study started with the principal as the unit of analysis, whereas previous literature focuses on effective schools as the unit of analysis (Capper & Young, in press; Maynes & Sarbit, 2000; Oakes et al., 2000; Scheurich, 1998; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001). In other words, this study focused on identifying principals who came to the field with a calling to do social justice work and from there expanded to exploring their accomplishments and struggles. In identifying these principals, I sought to examine leaders who were more than figureheads or managers of their schools and distinct from even dynamic instruction leaders. The principals identified were social justice advocates.

Second, this article makes the necessary connection between social justice and inclusion of students with disabilities; whereas there is minimal (Riester et al., 2002) discussion of special education and inclusive practices in the body of literature on social justice leadership. This connection is grounded in the belief that social justice cannot be a reality in schools where students with disabilities are segregated or pulled out from the regular classroom, or receive separate curriculum and instruction. Third, whereas there is theoretical work in the area of social justice and leadership (Blackmore, 2002; Bogotch, 2002; Dantley, 2002; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; MacKinnon, 2000; Marshall & Ward, 2004; Rapp, 2002; Shields, 2004), there is an absence of studies that specifically address the ways in which leaders enact justice, the resistance they face in that work, and how leaders maintain themselves to continue their pursuit of equity and justice.

DEFINING SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP

The literature is rife with definitions of social justice (Blackmore, 2002; Bogotch, 2002; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Gewirtz, 1998; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002). Gewirtz provides a meaning of social justice centered on the

ideas of disrupting and subverting arrangements that promote marginalization and exclusionary processes. Social justice supports a process built on respect, care, recognition, and empathy. Goldfarb and Grinberg define social justice "as the exercise of altering these [institutional and organizational] arrangements by actively engaging in reclaiming, appropriating, sustaining, and advancing inherent human rights of equity, equality, and fairness in social, economic, educational, and personal dimensions" (p. 162). However, Bogotch asserts that social justice is a social construction and that "there are no fixed or predictable meanings of social justice prior to actually engaging in educational leadership practices" (p. 153).

The definition of social justice leadership for this study was informed by the work of Gewirtz (1998) as well as Goldfarb and Grinberg (2002), who collectively center issues of social justice on an ultimate concern for situations of marginalization. Bogotch (2002) put forth a challenge in which the definition of social justice cannot be separate from the practices of educational leadership. In using these scholars' definitions and in heeding Bogotch's challenge, the definition of social justice for this study is grounded in the daily realities of school leadership. For this article, I define social justice leadership to mean that these principals make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision. This definition centers on addressing and eliminating marginalization in schools. Thus, inclusive schooling practices for students with disabilities, English language learners (ELLs), and other students traditionally segregated in schools are also necessitated by this definition. Sapon-Shevin (2003) stated, "Inclusion is not about disability. . . . Inclusion is about social justice. . . . By embracing inclusion as a model of social justice, we can create a world fit for all of us" (pp. 26, 28). The definition I used for this study builds on Sapon-Shevin's groundwork linking inclusive schooling and social justice.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To highlight the multiple ways in which school principals enacted social justice in their respective schools, the resistance they face in that work, and the resilience they develop to sustain their social justice work, the following research questions served as guideposts for this study:

1. In what ways are principals enacting social justice in public schools?
2. What resistance do social justice–driven principals face in their justice work?
3. What strategies do principals develop to sustain their ability to enact social justice in light of the resistance they face in public schools?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research focused on studying principals who sought their positions in educational administration in order to enact social justice and equity in the schools they led. I grounded this research in qualitative methods using a positioned-subject approach (Conrad, Haworth, & Millar, 2001). In a positioned-subject approach, the researcher assumes that the principals under investigation actively create meaning from and interpret their work. The positioned-subject approach of this inquiry was selected because it allowed me to take in the varied perspectives of a particular group of educational leaders and interpret their experiences through the lens of their particular situation and social justice goals.

Whereas feminist and postmodern theories have significantly influenced this research endeavor, I grounded this study primarily in critical theory (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Carspecken, 1996; Roman & Apple, 1990). All three of these traditions influenced this work because I believe that the world is complex, influenced by power relations, and not necessarily empirically knowable. I find common ground with these traditions in their understanding that a researcher's culture, background, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and experience inform her or his work and that a researcher brings ideas, assumptions, and theoretical understandings to each endeavor in the field (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998).

This study and my experience as a White male leader for social justice were driven by the belief, held widely by critical theorists, that my work should "benefit those who are marginalized in the society" and that "the current way society is organized is unjust" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 21). Whereas all of the principals in this study may not identify themselves as critical theorists, their work to transform their schools to benefit the most marginalized students and families, to address issues of race and class, and to focus their vision on developing a just school certainly aligned with this view and theoretical orientation.

The critical orientation of my work and my own desire for social change align with the tradition and description of activist research (Fine, 1994). Fine provides a general definition of activist research: "Some researchers fix themselves self-consciously as participatory activists. Their work seeks to unearth, disrupt, and transform existing ideological and/or institutional arrangements" (p. 17).[1]

In designing this study, I borrowed from the tradition of autoethnography (Cole & Knowles, 2001) and included myself, a principal driven to

enact social justice, as one of the subjects. In doing so I combined the qualitative, positioned-subjects methodology with principles from autoethnography. Cole & Knowles define autoethnography as a research design that "places the self within a sociocultural context. . . . Autoethnography uses the self as a starting point or vantage point from which to explore broader sociocultural elements, issues or constructs" (p. 16).[2]

Including myself enabled me to make this work more personal and reflective. Tierney (1998) and Mbilinyi (1989) suggest that these are essential elements to meaningful scholarship. I do not see this methodological choice as self-indulgent—"not as an act of hubris," as Tierney notes, "but as a necessary methodological device to move us toward a newer understanding of reality, ourselves and truths" (p. 56). The principles of autoethnography and self-study that I borrowed for this study can be understood as opening my experiences and myself to study in a critical, reflective, and serious manner. Combining in one study an examination of my practices and experiences with those of other principals provided for deeper and broader understanding of the issues and strategies discussed. For me, studying social justice principals and hiding my experience by not including myself in the study would have felt disingenuous and would not have provided the authenticity I sought.

Numerous scholars have used autoethnography as a methodological tool for gaining understanding into various issues (Anderson, 1996; Cole & Knowles, 2000; Dews & Law, 1995; Ellis, 2004; Franzosa, 1999; Jackson, 1995; Knowles, Cole, & Presswood, 1994; Meneley & Young, 2005; Schoem, 1991). Whereas no educational leadership research has been published that combines the principles of autoethnography with qualitative, positioned-subjects methodology as I did, Meneley and Young provide description of varied scholarly practices utilizing autoethnographic methodologies.

Whereas I included myself in this study, I wrote the findings and discussion in the third person, even when I am speaking of my own experiences. I used pseudonyms for the other principals as well as for myself. I did this because I am only one subject in a group of activist principals, and changing to the first person or using my name exerts a particular power that unnecessarily shifts the focus to my experiences over the experiences of the group of principals.

The method of data collection relied on a series of in-depth interviews, a review of documents and materials, a detailed field log, and a group meeting of the principal participants. I included data from my own experience as a principal leading for social justice, completing interviews on my experiences with the assistance of a doctoral student/principal. This principal

interviewed me in the same manner and using the same interview protocol that I used when I conducted the interviews of the other principals.

I used the constant comparative method of data analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) using both inductive and deductive components (Erickson, 1986; Graue & Walsh, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The constant comparative method was utilized for this research endeavor because the design contained "multi-data sources" (Bogdan & Biklen, p. 66). This method worked well with the guiding research questions in that "key issues, recurrent events, or activities in the data that become categories of focus . . . discover basic processes and relationships" (Bogdan & Biklen, p. 67). The process of constant "doubling back to more data collection and coding" provided an essential analytical approach to understanding the data from principals working for social justice.[3]

Trustworthiness is a key component to any study and, as Glesne (1999) states, "is an issue that should be thought about during research design as well as in the midst of data collection" (p. 32). I used triangulation (Crowson, 1993), member checks and debriefing (Glesne, 1999), and constant reflectivity and humility (Eisenhart & Howe, 1992; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Tierney, 1998) to enhance the trustworthiness of this work.[4]

Being a member of the group studied, a group that shares significant qualities and values, also enhanced the reflective and humility aspects of trustworthiness. Tierney problematizes studying the "Other" who is "in many respects powerless or exotic to the author on a grand level" (p. 58). He asserts that studying a group to which you do not belong can be reinforcing of existing power inequities and additionally can be condescending. In studying a group to which I belong, I sought to move away from these specific problems or issues Tierney raises.

Whereas there are problems with studying yourself and problems with studying a group to which you belong, doing so does move away, at least slightly, from an unequal distribution of power between the participants and the researcher. In this study I sought to

> "in effect make ourselves, rather than the Other, vulnerable; we reveal ourselves in the text as a narrative character, not as an act of hubris but as a necessary methodological device to move us toward a newer understanding of reality, ourselves and truths" (Tierney, 1998, p. 56).

Participants

For this study I sought participants who did not fit the traditional understanding that school leaders are essentially managers. Additionally, I sought participants who operated from a place beyond the newer understanding

that principals are instructional leaders, principals who embodied a commitment to enacting justice and equity. Using purposeful and snowball sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Maxwell, 1998), 18 principals were referred to participate in this study. I started this sampling with 2 principals with whose work I was familiar from overlapping graduate and professional experiences. These principals recommended other principals who might meet the criteria, as well as university faculty who might know additional principals who could contribute to the study. This purposefully snowballed into a potential sample of 18 principals. Whereas a number of important pieces of empirical work on leaders for social justice have focused on principals in one state (Riester et al., 2002; Scheurich, 1998; Skrla et al, 2004; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001; Vibert & Portelli, 2000), these 18 nominated principals spanned three Midwestern states and four major metropolitan areas. Eight principals met the selection criteria,[5] but only 7 agreed to participate in this study.

All 7 principals worked in urban schools in the Midwest. Of the 7 participants, 4 were secondary principals (2 high school and 2 middle school) and 3 were elementary principals. One identified as Asian and 6 identified as White. One identified as gay and out in the community and 6 identified themselves as heterosexual. Three of the principals were women and 4 were men. Their administrative experience ranged from 3 to 16 years. The principals' ages ranged from the early 30s to the mid-50s. Whereas this group is diverse in a number of ways, clearly it is not a racially diverse group. Five principals of color were referred to me through the snowball sampling process, but only one met the criteria for selection.[6] Table 1 details the school demographics of the principal participants.

It is both arrogant and shortsighted to assume that any research endeavor does not have ethical considerations. Whereas there were a number of ethical considerations for this study, the primary concern was to "do no harm" to the principal participants. Lee and Renzetti (as cited in Goodson & Sikes, 2001) suggest using certain care for research subjects when the research examines deeply personal experiences and when the work impinges on people in power. Because these principals are so closely connected to their work, they challenge the norms of their communities, and do not fit the traditional metanarrative of the principal. I felt an ethical obligation to do no harm because of the sensitive nature of their interviews. To help deal with the potential sensitivity of this work and to do no harm to the principals involved, I used pseudonyms for each principal, and for the most sensitive of stories I do not identify the principals by pseudonym. To further protect their confidentiality, I do not identify principals by school in Table 1. Protecting the anonymity of the participants is an essential ethical

TABLE 1
School Demographic Information

School	School Level	Total Students	Students in Special Education[a] (%)	Students in Poverty[b] (%)	Students of Color (%)	Staff of Color (%)
A	High	375	20	90	99	67
B	High	132	23	35	34	15
C	Middle	450	25	47	49	13
D	Middle	425	22	40	35	10
E	Elementary	380	14	40	53	8
F	Elementary	360	6	25	38	5
G	Elementary	290	8	8	34	15

a. Students in special education are students in the school with Individual Education Plans, meeting Individual With Disabilities Education Act disability criteria. This does not include students whose Individual Education Plans is only for speech and language.
b. Students in poverty are students who are qualified to receive free and reduced-cost lunch.

platform of this study. Additionally, concealing specific school context positions social justice as possible in every school for every child, not as possible only in certain places. However, I will give information about each of the principals' backgrounds and how they developed their ideas of social justice.

Principal Eli

Principal Eli came from a family that owned local community-oriented grocery stores. This was a major influence in his life and instilled a value of connecting, being active, and contributing to the community. Eli ran this family grocery business for 15 years. He taught 8 years of high school history and then left teaching to operate the family grocery business. He took over running the business from his parents. This grocery business was an active part of the community in the neighborhood where he grew up and currently lives.

He was encouraged to think about school administration by faculty members at a local university. After selling his business he became a principal. Principal Eli attributed his orientation to do social justice work to the running of a small community-oriented and community-involved business and to the political climate of growing up in the 1960s and 1970s. He left the grocery business to become an assistant principal for 2 years and then moved into a head principalship. Principal Eli is in his early 50s.

Principal Taylor

Principal Taylor fled Vietnam with her family after the Vietnam War. Fleeing Vietnam meant that her family left everything—other family, money, possessions, and community status. She explained that her parents did this to give their "children a better life and a better education."

She asserted that her commitment to social justice came from her parents, the Catholic Church, and her experience leaving Vietnam. These forces taught her "to do the right thing . . . that we're not here just for ourselves but for the good of everyone . . . [and] the whole idea of treating people with kindness and dignity." Before becoming a principal, Taylor worked as a school counselor for 3 years. That experience cemented her need to do equity and justice work as a school administrator. She is in her early 30s and was in her 3rd year as principal during this research.

Principal Dale

Principal Dale is now in his mid-50s and has been a principal for 16 years. He shared that he began developing his commitment to justice as a young person. His family was a major influence in fostering a sense of fairness and fair treatment. His parents instilled in him the notion that "education was the route to a better life." Dale recalled thinking and questioning in high school about how and why some students were seen and treated as "misfits." He talked about his personal interest in history—labor history, Black history, and the relationship between the United States and Japan were examples that helped frame his commitment to equity and justice. That historical perspective combined with the values of fairness for everybody, and growing up in the 1960s and 1970s, built the foundation for his connection to social justice. He taught for 10 years in a variety of positions in middle and high schools, became a talented and gifted coordinator for the school district for 6 years, and then became a principal.

Principal Natalie

Principal Natalie attributed her commitment to social justice in part to growing up in a rural area with a very close family. Her family was

> "instrumental in getting Title IX truly followed [at the local high school] . . . always doing these extra church things like going on missions . . . supporting other families like one where a parent was dying of cancer. As kids we always saw that you are a part of something bigger than yourself."

She also attributed hating high school and feeling ostracized to her conviction that no child can be allowed to fall through the cracks in schools. Natalie discussed how these experiences and a personal interest in history had influenced her commitment to "leave things better than you came onto them." She worked as the director for community organizations such as the YMCA and nonprofits that care for people with developmental disabilities, and then she held administrative positions at a technical school. Natalie shared that those experiences continued to shape her commitment to enact social justice. Following those positions, she taught public elementary school physical education for 4 years and high school for 2 years. She became an athletic director and an assistant principal, and had been a head principal for 5 years before this study. Principal Natalie is in her late 40s.

Principal Meg

Principal Meg, who taught elementary school in a large urban area for 4 years, indicated that her commitment to social justice developed at the end of college and when she started teaching. She spoke about noticing discrimination as she grew up, and developing a sense of fairness, but said she did not feel the need to take action until the beginning of her professional career. She spoke about how studying philosophy as an undergraduate significantly contributed to the "logic" she sees in working for equity and justice. In part she connected her commitment to her brother, her cooperating teacher when she student taught, her own personal struggles growing up, and being a White teacher in a Black school with predominantly African American staff. She is in her mid-30s and was a principal for 8 years before this research started.

Principal Scott

Principal Scott attributed his development of thinking about social justice to the church he attended while growing up. Although he is no longer active, he described the Church of the Brethren as a peace church similar to Mennonites. The church exposed him to issues about the Vietnam War, social activism of the 1960s and 1970s, conscientious objectors, volunteer service workers, refugees, and issues of race.

Principal Scott started his educational career as a band instructor, but his schooling began with an engineering degree. He described an agitating moment in his early days of teaching that continued to propel him to do equity work.

> I started to see all the White kids in jazz band, no African American kids in jazz band, no Black kids in jazz band; you know jazz is essentially invented by Black people and now the Black kids are not included in this particular activity in school. . . . So I started to work harder at it.

He stated that his wife, family, and friends continually push and motivate him to further justice and equity in his school today. He was an assistant principal for 3 years and was in the 1st year as a head principal during this study. Principal Scott is in his early 40s.

Principal Tracy

Principal Tracy, who is in his mid-30s, attributed his commitment to social justice to growing up as a part of an activist family. Ever since he was a young boy, he participated in peace and justice work with his parents and sisters. He stated that "being socially responsible and taking action to create a more just world" was a passion instilled in him by his family. He realized he had talents with children as a high school student, but as an undergraduate decided to combine that ability and his drive to do social justice work in the field of education. Before becoming a principal, he taught for 7 years in urban elementary schools with the majority of his experience as a kindergarten and first-grade teacher. Principal Tracy was never an assistant principal and was a head principal for 3 years before this study began.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

I begin this Findings section by discussing the ways in which the principals enacted social justice, followed by the resistance they faced to that work, and conclude with the strategies they developed to sustain their social justice work. It is important to note that the principals provided much more elaborate and intricate responses to the first and second questions. They provided much more synthesized responses to the third research question—the resistance they developed. This is reflected in the presentation of these three aspects of social justice leadership.

Ways Principals Enact Social Justice

Not only did these principals possess a remarkable commitment to equity and justice, but also under their leadership the schools they led became better educational environments. These leaders enacted their own resistance by (a) raising student achievement, (b) improving school structures, (c) recentering and enhancing staff capacity, and (d) strengthening school culture and community.

I start this discussion with raising student achievement because this is the core of the needed improvements for marginalized students. I position the next three advancements of these principals' social justice agenda—improving school structures, recentering and enhancing staff capacity, and strengthening school culture and community—in two ways. First, all three of these advancements toward justice were strategies these principals utilized to improve student achievement. Second, whereas improving school structures, recentering staff capacity, and strengthening school culture aided in raising achievement, the principals additionally insisted that these steps or strategies were necessary because they were the moral or right course of action. For example, principals described that they eliminated pullout models of special education or English as a second language (ESL) because they felt it was discriminatory to segregate students in that manner and because they knew the positive impact on achievement inclusive practices would have on all students and, in particular, on previously separated students (Frattura & Capper, in press).

Raising student achievement. First, these principals enacted social justice in their schools by raising student achievement. Six of the 7 principals' schools demonstrated significant improvements in student achievement during their tenure. The 7th principal was in his 1st year as head principal and adequate time had not passed to document changes in achievement. All of the principals felt they had a duty and a "moral obligation" to raise achievement for marginalized students. Whereas 4 principals discussed their understanding of the critique of state-mandated standardized accountability systems, they still felt the need to see all of their students excel on these assessments, and were not content to measure achievement solely with state test data. In this regard they provided and used both state test data and local assessments.[7] An example of increased student achievement came from Principal Tracy.

Principal Tracy provided compelling data in terms of student achievement growth. During his 3 years as principal, the students experienced dramatic improvement on the statewide reading test. Principal Tracy stated that when he arrived only 70% of the students were tested for accountability purposes. This was the case for both state-mandated and locally created assessments. However, 3 years later 98% of students participated in all assessments. When he started, roughly 50% of the students achieved proficient or advanced levels; during his tenure this rose to 86%. Moreover, he provided data on dramatic improvements for various marginalized groups of students. These improvements are summarized in Table 2. Principal Tracy noted that these gains in literacy scores on the state test were confirmed by local assessments as well.

TABLE 2
Statewide Reading Test Student-Achievement Data

Category	*% in 2000*	*% in 2004*
Students tested	70	98
All students, proficient or advanced	50	86
African American students, proficient or advanced	33	78
Asian students, proficient or advanced	47	100
Hispanic students, proficient or advanced	18	100
Special education students, proficient or advanced	13	60
English language learners, proficient or advanced	17	100
Students in poverty, proficient or advanced	40	78

When Tracy arrived in 2000 the school was put on the state's preliminary No Child Left Behind list of "Schools in Need of Improvement." With the achievement gains in every content area on both local and state assessments, Principal Tracy's school moved off the state list of failing schools—evidenced by the dramatic improvement in achievement over 3 years. Principal Tracy was not alone in leading successful efforts to improve achievement. Principal Meg said that "our Latino students went from not being included in state and local assessments to 90% of these students achieving at proficient or advanced levels." Similarly, Principal Eli provided data that indicated that his school's African American students had improved from 15% of students achieving passing grades on local and state measures to 45%. He indicated there was "much work left to be done," but "our kids are achieving better."

Improving school structures. The second strategy these principals used to enact social justice involved changing the structures of their schools. Whereas not every principal restructured her or his school in the same manner, each took different steps to improve her or his school structure. Six of the 7 principals led an elimination of pullout and segregated programs at their schools. Principal Dale provided an example of this as he explained some of the changes at his school. He spoke of "two major initiatives to eliminate pullout and segregated programs." The first initiative centered on "detracking the math program." In eliminating an ability-tracked math program, Principal Dale noted that the previous lower track and remedial-level classes for math were "populated by poor and minority students." He said, "We're trying to provide equity by shifting to heterogeneously [in terms of ability and background characteristics] grouped math instruction."

The second initiative involved the "movement to pretty much fully include special education students into the curriculum. We have about 20 to 25% of our kids from special ed. They spend virtually all of their time in a regular education classroom now." Principal Dale explained that this change "replaced the former service-delivery system where the instruction for the students with special education labels took place only in groups of students with special education labels, outside the regular education classrooms, in resource rooms, or in special education classrooms."

Five of the seven principals discussed their efforts to increase rigor and access to educational opportunities. Principal Natalie stated, "We have more academic rigor infused into the curriculum . . . and we are offering eight 'advanced' level classes that were never offered before." Principal Natalie talked about staff attitudes and how the staff were used to having lower expectation about course content, and with a push for broader offerings she also pushed for higher expectations within the courses. She shared, "We used to just want kids to feel good about school, but now they feel good and we have 'big academics.'"

Along with the increase in rigor and opportunities, these principals discussed a need for developing increased accountability for the achievement of all students. Principal Meg explained the state of accountability when she arrived at her school:

> There were no documentation or achievement records for any of the students learning English. . . . They're treated so separately and separate isn't equal so they totally get left out and so we'll say we're delivering these special services, but we're not going to pay attention to whether or not they're effective. Who monitors this? Nobody is accountable. When I started we had no data on our ELL kids.

Principal Meg stated that now every child at her school has "informal portfolios and achievement data recorded at least three times a year." Local teachers designed the assessments, aligned them with state and local standards, and administered them individually or in small groups. She described how this structural change has affected instruction and achievement: "A wealth of information came from the assessments and this information allowed the teachers to individualize their curriculum and design instruction tailored to the needs of all of their students."

These changes to school structure are not only strategies the principals used to raise achievement but also stand-alone accomplishments of the principals' enacted resistance to educational inequalities. These principals maintained that enacting this form of resistance to all tracking or segregation models was not only a pedagogical or learning shift but also a moral

act. They felt it was the right thing to do, not only to pursue raising student achievement but also because they believed that systems that provided separate programs maintained unequal levels of instruction, maintained the marginalization of particular students, and created a situation in which those particular students received an inferior education. These principals' beliefs directly countered the ideas of deficit thinking (Valencia, 1997). Hence, the changes in structure as a result of their beliefs (e.g., creating heterogeneous and inclusive programs) positioned traditionally marginalized students' failure not as their own deficiencies or "fault" but as an inherent result of an unjust system. The powerful combination of the steps they took to improve school structures enacted a strong resistance against the status quo of schooling that transformed their schools to the benefit of all students but in particular marginalized children.

Recentering and enhancing staff capacity. The third strategy that these principals used to improve achievement and create more just schools involved strengthening their schools' staff. In other words, the principals resisted the assumptions that typical teacher education or staff development programs were adequate preparation in substantiating a social justice orientation and practices for educators. They sought to increase staff capacity by addressing issues of race, providing ongoing staff development focused on building equity, developing staff investment in social justice, hiring and supervising for justice, and empowering staff.

Principal Meg discussed one way she worked to build staff capacity. She shared, "We have open and candid discussions about race. We have spent considerable time learning and investigating Whiteness . . . through book groups, professional development about White privilege, sharing our personal racial autobiographies . . . since most of my staff is White."

She organized and facilitated learning for her staff in the area of ELLs. As a part of a major restructuring effort, her staff needed to gain knowledge, skills, and licensure in working with students learning English. Principal Meg arranged for a university professor who taught in the area of ESL to teach credit-bearing courses after school in the school library. These classes were offered for a number of years. Principal Meg reported,

> Many of the staff took these classes . . . one custodian, the school clerk, a PE teacher, our art teacher, our music teacher, special education teachers, I think every classroom teacher, a number of assistants, and me, the principal. Through this training eight teachers received certification as ELL teachers.

Principal Meg and the other social justice principals enacted resistance to prevailing assumptions about learning and learning environments through

instituting programs of staff development, hiring, and supervision. They built staffs that possessed not only the pedagogical skills to reach every student, but also a commitment to equity. Principal Natalie discussed how this commitment within her staff has changed.

> In the past staff were saying, "We've got a great place here and if they don't make it here, that's their damn problem." . . . Now they're saying, "Hey we've got this curriculum, we've got this and this support for them, they're still not making it, what else can *I* do to change?"

Additionally these principals were committed to empowering their staffs. Staff members were given professional freedom, valued as people, and had a greater say in the running of the school. In a newspaper article on Principal Eli and his leadership, staff members are quoted as saying, "Eli is so open and straight forward that it makes you want to be part of the system. A traditional principal tells you exactly what to do, and most of the time you don't even know what's going on." In speaking, Principal Eli exuded trust and respect for his staff.

These principals also led their staffs in an examination of issues of race, existing injustice, and historical inequity as related to schools and learning. The principals shared that they supported both symbolically and with the resources at their disposal staff growth and learning that focused on equity.

Strengthening school culture and community. The final way these principals enacted social justice involved strengthening the school culture and community. The principals reported that they worked to create a warm and welcoming school climate and how they reached out to the community and to marginalized families.

Principal Eli shared an illustration of how he enacted this resistance by building relationships with students. He stated sadly, "When I came here, it was a depressing, out-of-control 'ghetto' high school—fights, tardiness, absence from school, to a certain degree a stereotypical bad ghetto high school." He continued,

> It's night-and-day different . . . Where you have teams of teachers that know all the kids, or a lot of kids, and knowing them allows you to have a relationship with them . . . you develop relationship so they buy into better behavior. So if there's a kid, we have some rough kids, you know exposed to bad stuff out there, you want to keep it out of the school . . . gang stuff, horrible stuff, or somebody beats somebody up, but you have a relationship with that kid. You know 9 out of 10 times you'd be able to stop that behavior, I mean with relationships you can.

Principal Eli described that the school now experiences fewer fights and fewer false fire alarms. Students tell staff they feel safer, and new students reported that they felt safer there than at their previous schools. He made the point that to create a warmer and safer climate the key was to "make people feel good about themselves, to build relationships with staff and students, and to be visible."

Principal Dale started developing a warmer climate by changing the way school personnel greeted families. He stated,

> In the past many parents were greeted not as warmly. The way the school welcomes parents can make a big difference. We worked to change that and you can see and feel the difference. Parents and community members commented on the change, but more importantly, you see more parents, and you hear in their tone that they feel respected.

Principal Tracy discussed his work with staff and community members as well:

> [Working together, we] physically transformed the inside and outside of the school . . . so that every hallway and entranceway was bursting with beautiful children's art . . . and creating a beautiful, vibrant playground that dramatically changed the nature and time of recess. . . . Students and community were involved in developing and maintaining the environment; they felt connected, they took responsibility for the school.

Principal Meg described her school's efforts to reach out specifically to marginalized families that resulted in a change from having "only two Latino parents officially serving on school committees" to a program that involved consistently "more than 30 Latino parents in official" school organizations.

By resisting the historic disconnect between marginalized families and schools, the social justice–oriented principals in this study worked to create warm and welcoming school climates and also reached out to the community and in particular to disenfranchised families. Not only did the improved school climate and closer connections to the community affect student achievement, but also this form of resistance served to challenge and begin to transform the White, middle-class assumptions regarding students, families, and communities that permeate public schools across the country. For example, these principals reported not only that greater numbers of marginalized families participated in their schools, but also that the school staff began to understand, construct, seek, and value participation from families in ways other than the traditional parent-teacher organizations,

conferences, field trips, open houses, and fundraisers. The schools led by the social justice–oriented principals created diverse entry points including ethnic parent meetings, multilanguage forums and family communication, and culturally relevant school events.

In summary, the empirical data from these principals gives meaning to how principals enact social justice in their school settings. This work helped make sense of what these principals introduced and accomplished in their schools that sought to displace (e.g., Fine, 1994) the traditional norms informing public school leadership. These norms have maintained power and privilege for certain groups of people and marginalized students based on race, class, disability, sexual orientation, language, gender, family structure, and neighborhood. It is clear that these principals made significant accomplishments in challenging these norms and assumptions and advancing justice.

The Resistance Principals Faced in Their Social Justice Work

"I have yet to experience a day without enormous barriers to this work," commented one principal when asked about the pressures he faced in trying to enact his social justice agenda. The principals working to enact social justice met formidable resistance to their efforts. This section includes empirical data that addressed the second guiding research question: What resistance do social justice–driven principals face in their justice work? They faced resistance from within and outside of their schools and communities. I will discuss the resistance from within the school and immediate community separately from resistance from the district and beyond. This section of the findings will conclude with data about how this resistance resulted in significant consequences to these principals.

Within the school and immediate community. While advancing justice, these principals met resistance within their own schools and communities. They described that they felt this resistance coming directly from the demands of the principalship, the momentum of the status quo, obstructive staff attitudes and beliefs, and insular and privileged parental expectations.

The daily requirements of what is described as a "nearly impossible" (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003) job, combined with a personal belief that they can and must quickly create just schools, produced serious resistance for these leaders. Principal Scott provided a clear example of the job of principal itself constituting resistance to enacting social justice.

> Well, if you have a job that the expectation is that it takes 11 hours a day and you still can't do it all, you don't have the luxury of sitting down and having

> this conversation [about the ethnocentric social studies curriculum] even if you know that the conversation is necessary. I mean to sit down and have that conversation would require me to neglect my family, neglect my health, fall behind on necessary paperwork, not do any evaluations of any other teachers, ignore a bunch of student discipline, probably skip some truancy conferences, be late mailing things. All kinds of things fall apart every time you want to dig in on a problem.

In addition to the demands of the position Principal Natalie conveyed the pervasive sentiment by her staff who took comfort in keeping the status quo.

> When I arrived at the school, the prevailing sentiment was, "It's worked this way for 32 years and you're coming in here and changing us? You want us to have academic rigor, you want us to make decisions, you want us to take responsibility for kids not learning, we've never had to do that before."

The principals felt that various teachers or groups of staff members held attitudes and beliefs that proved to be resistance to their work. Principal Dale discussed that he faced staff whose attitudes provided such resistance to his social justice agenda because they did not match the direction in which he guided the school. He stated, "There are some staff who feel that having special ed. kids in the classroom disrupts the other kids. They don't want challenging behaviors or students who really struggle academically in their classroom." He saw that this belief "constantly contributed to seeing students with special education labels as marginal and even second-class members of the classroom."

Principal Tracy explained the resistance he experienced from staff and middle-class White parents:

> There's a fair amount of pressure to look at things in a certain way. They didn't necessarily want an inclusive program, didn't want to think about creating a different math program. . . . There was this nostalgic feeling, that "if-we-only-had-those-good-students-again" mentality, and what that meant was "if we only had all White middle-class students again, the way it used to be," a lot of resistance to doing things differently, to looking at our need to change, to being reflective, to planning together. . . . So there was a fair amount of resistance I felt from that. Not everyone, but certain staff and parents were really resistant in that way.

Each of these principals faced resistance from within her or his school and local community. This resistance took different forms from school to school but the place of daily work was an ongoing source of struggle and

resistance. Continuing "outward" from the school and immediate community, the principals discussed resistance from school district personnel and myriad expectations and assumptions regarding their appropriate roles as education leaders.

In the district and beyond. The principals faced resistance from within and beyond their school districts. The principals discussed how resistance from their district and beyond came from unsupportive central office administrators, a formidable bureaucracy, prosaic colleagues, a lack of resources, harmful state and federal regulations, and uninspired administrator preparation.

Meeting resistance from these sources left the principals feeling isolated, without models of how to do their social justice work, in a system not designed to support them, and working with and for people who did not share or value their social justice commitment.[8] These principals for social justice faced these various types of resistance both within and beyond the district; examples directly from the interview data follow.

One principal felt the system itself did not promote equity and justice:

> The culture of bureaucracy is not set up to support this; reporting structures are very confusing, very blurred, You don't know who you report to, who has got the power over you, and they all give you directives. . . . I'm required to go to a lot of meetings out of the building. . . . [We're expected] to have better bulletin boards, better minutes of meetings, more meetings, that kind of stuff. . . . You run into bureaucrats who tell you, you can't do things . . . you need to have this form on yellow not blue paper. . . . It's about compliance with the bureaucracy, not about really reaching every kid.

In addition, all of the principals stated that they experienced resistance from specific administrators in the central office. One principal shared a painful story about an ongoing issue regarding keeping a student with significant special needs at his home school and in the regular classroom. Whereas the principal and staff were extremely challenged by the child's disability, they advocated for the child to remain with them because they felt this student was making progress:

> Regarding a very difficult situation with a student, a decision was made [to remove the child from our school] without my knowledge. The district communicated with the parent without my knowledge. . . . The decision came to me via the teacher, via the parent. I was horrified. I actually told the teacher that "No this was not the decision. I'm sure it's not, I had no knowledge of it." I called the special ed. coordinator, yes that's exactly what happened—I felt very, very undermined.

Another principal shared perceptions of other principals' commitment and drive:

> Some colleagues just don't have any drive in this [equity and justice]. That's not why they're a principal. Take [name of principal], that's not why he's doing this job. He's not in it for equity or social justice or educating all kids. He doesn't even seem to understand what equity and social justice mean in schools. I'm not really sure why he does this . . . that could be [the resistance I face] too, that you sit around in a principals' meeting and 30 of us are there and maybe only 2 people are having the emotional struggle of trying to promote a social justice agenda . . . and then you see so many people who, who don't care and whose agenda items suck up weight, suck up your time.

The principals discussed a lack of resources as another way they faced resistance to their social justice work. Principal Scott discussed his frustration with this problem. The school district faced serious budget cuts for many years in a row, and eventually his school lost its assistant principal. He felt an enormous barrier to his equity work was "how to accomplish the same amount of work with one less person." He continued about the need for more resources:

> The amount of money that we're working with is a barrier, but that's a barrier to lots of things. It's a barrier to equity because equity is expensive. Teaching kids who don't have resources at home costs more money than teaching middle-class kids.

These principals also cited specific regulations placed on them by their state and the federal government that acted as resistance to their efforts to enact social justice. Principal Meg stated,

> The state statutes written for English language learners specifically are incredibly marginalizing and racist in how they're funded and how they force programming to be. They only reimburse school districts something like 20 cents on the dollar for services. And if I wanted to have a two-way bilingual program, which research says is the best kind of program; I would actually have to get the ELL parents to sign a form denying ELL services for their kids in order for their kids to be in a two-way bilingual program. How stupid. Tell me that's not confusing for ELL parents—they have to deny services in order to get the best kind. Of course that has funding consequences as well. So, that [state regulations] would be another barrier, talk about system problems; it's not just our district, it's the state system, it's the Title I system from the feds.

A final way the principals in the study experienced resistance is through uninspiring preparation programs. All of the principals agreed with the sentiment that their preparation programs did not prepare or aid in their social justice work. One principal shared,

> In terms of equity or justice, I haven't learned much at all. I remember sitting in my administrative preparation classes, at one of the best administrative preparation programs in the country, and looking around thinking, there are people here I know can't do the work that needs to be done because they're not interested, they don't get it. The program needs to make them understand that this [leading for equity and justice] is part of their job . . . but I never got that feeling in my program. Dealing with race, disability, ELL, etc. were not a priority. If leading for social justice wasn't a part of you when you entered, you weren't going to learn it in the ed. admin. program.

These principals discussed their experiences with the resistance they encountered as they sought to enact justice and equity. These experiences addressed the second research question. Additionally they described the consequences and effects of this resistance.

Consequences of the resistance on the principals. The resistance these principals faced from their positions, their staff, the community, the school district, and beyond posed serious consequences for the leaders in this study. They described two consequences of facing this resistance:

1. a great personal toll and
2. a persistent sense of discouragement.

The principals described how the personal toll they felt took physical, emotional, and mental forms. This toll repeatedly had serious implications on their emotional and physical well-being. One principal described this toll:

> I was so frustrated by the fact I couldn't change things fast enough . . . that really ate me up physically and emotionally. . . . When all these pressures came together, and it [the school] wasn't better, it just drove me crazy. I do not say *crazy* lightly. I do not mean *crazy* like it was funny or I was being wacky. . . . To give you an example, there were periods of months when I threw up every morning. There were periods of time when every day I couldn't help but cry alone in my office. . . . There was a huge toll on who I was [starting to cry]. I had trouble sleeping. At school I was myself, I faked it, but outside of school, I wasn't myself.

Another principal shared the toll from the resistance she faced: It "tears away at your soul. It beats you down and makes you depressed. . . . It didn't change my vision, but I feel more defeated, like I'm never going to get there."

Another principal shared that the toll she experienced from resistance to social justice "does wear on you as a leader." She continued,

> There's so much pressure that there are times that I feel, gosh, it would be so much easier [laughs] to just turn my back on this, but then it's the conscience

> that eats at you and the passion of why you actually wanted to do this in the first place and I always come back to that, and I never have been able to let that go, so the battles, you still fight the battles, but it definitely is wearing me down. . . . I'm tired mentally and physically [beginning to cry]. . . . I knew it would be difficult. I didn't know that it would be devastating.

Another principal explained that working 65 to 80 hours a week is "like basic training in the army. You are beat down over and over. . . . My health is being jeopardized." This principal continued,

> The job really consumes my thinking. Even when you're not working, your mind is continually going, it never stops. . . . [Many nights] I wake up at 3 in the morning in a cold sweat because I can't stop thinking about all the things that need to be done.

One principal described some of the physical aspects of the toll he felt:

> I probably had a 70- to 80-pound weight swing, I lost 20 pounds in a month and I'd gain it back over a few, and then I'd lose it and gain it back. I'm not a nutritionist, but that doesn't strike me as particularly healthy. . . . It [the resistance I faced] had a huge impact, a toll on my body and on my spirit. That was really sad. I started drinking [alcohol] more than I should. I saw a therapist. I took medicine. . . . There was a lot of toll on who I was.

Another principal discussed a sense of persistent discouragement:

> This stuff [creating a more just school] is easier said than done, I mean I have to tell you how hard it is. We try, but we're so far away from where I think we need to be. That's why I get discouraged. . . . It gets to be too much, and I get discouraged. . . . I think, man I'm an F-up, I'm no good at anything. . . . Why do I get discouraged? Because you care, you care and you try and you do and then you run up against the bureaucrats who tell you you can't do things, or you run up against a society that sometimes it's so unjust that whatever you do, you're not going to change it. You feel like what you're doing is futile.

These principals were descriptive about the resistance they faced as well as the consequences that resistance had on them as individuals. In order not to be completely overwhelmed and worn down by this resistance, these social justice principals developed their own strategies to deal with these consequences as well as the resistance they faced.

The Strategies Principals Developed to Sustain Social Justice Work

Little has been written about the strategies principals use to sustain themselves. For the principals in this study, developing this type of resistance

proved essential to advancing social justice in the face of ongoing resistance. These leaders shared how they sustained themselves both professionally and personally to continue with their social justice work. These social justice principals created and used two kinds of strategies as a means of developing their own resistance: proactive and coping.

Proactive strategies. The findings suggest that the principals in this study relied on proactive strategies to enable them professionally to continue their work toward social justice. These strategies involved approaching the daily work of the principalship differently and examining the position to keep the overwhelming scope as well as barriers manageable. The principals developed and used different proactive strategies. These strategies included communicating purposefully and authentically, developing a supportive administrative network, working together for change, keeping their eyes on the prize, prioritizing their work, engaging in professional learning, and building relationships.

The principals described that using purposeful and authentic communication created some momentum in the direction of social justice, reaffirmed the principals' beliefs to those around them, and helped these principals feel that even though a change may be slow they did something by speaking their truth. Principal Natalie described this strategy in working with staff conflicts or staff resistance.

> I deal with that person, I deal with this individual that's out there on the fringes and say, "This is where I'm at, this is what I need for you, I'm sorry if you are upset with me, but for a school focus this is what has to happen" and we just keep having the conversation. I said, "You can be mad at me, you can tell me anything you want to tell me, but we have to have the conversation. You can't go off to someone else and say 'Natalie is not supporting me' or whatever. You've got to come to me and tell me that so we can work together."

Developing supportive networks provided opportunities to share ideas, emotional support, encouragement, and assistance in problem solving. Principal Eli shared, "You have to find people in the bureaucracy who share your ideas. . . . There's a few, not many." Principal Natalie explained the support her network offered:

> I need to be around people that are doing my same job, hearing what they're going through and saying maybe I can help you with this or maybe you can help me with this, you know that whole feeling of I'm not alone in the world.

Whereas many of these principals set out to create more democratic schools and, as discussed previously, created systems that empowered staff,

using these democratic structures then became a strategy for overcoming the resistance they faced to do equity work.

Principal Tracy discussed how shared decision making became a strategy to overcome barriers.

> Our representative staff group gave people ownership in big decisions. And while it was always a struggle for me trusting the process, I never overturned a decision of that group. So, when people complained or felt frustrated, everyone knew it was a collective decision. It changed the sentiment from "the administration is screwing things up" to "this was our decision, we have to make it work." . . . It has helped the school but also helped me in that I wasn't drowning. Not only did we make good decisions, but I felt less alone, less drained, and more inspired to do this type of work.

For Principal Tracy, keeping his eyes on the prize meant keeping equity and justice at the heart of conversation and celebrating success. Principal Tracy stated,

> Whether it was during the literacy conferences I held with every teacher or discussions about schoolwide discipline or evaluation meetings with individual staff . . . I tried to always bring race, poverty, gender, and disability into our conversations. Even if there wasn't a decision to be made, I felt like I was making progress, I felt OK with myself, I felt I could keep up this nearly impossible work, if at least the important issues were being talked about, if we were at least acknowledging equity.

Principal Meg also summarized the essence of her prioritizing her work strategy: "Over and over I had to evaluate, what is possible now, what can wait, what can I give to someone else, and what do I personally need to do to not go crazy."

In addition to communicating purposefully and authentically, developing a supportive network, working together for change, keeping their eyes on the prize, and prioritizing their work, ongoing learning helped these leaders better enact their agenda in the face of resistance. This professional learning was focused on the needs of their schools in combination with what they felt were their personal limitations. One principal shared, "The book study groups, the learning we do as a staff, really helped me with some of the stress I feel as far as, am I competent to do this?"

All of the principals stated that building relationship was a key strategy they used as a way to enact justice in the face of resistance. Principal Eli emphatically discussed building relationships as a strategy to accomplish this:

> [With staff] I think that [relationships are] really important, you've got to make people feel good about themselves. There's that day-to-day stuff,

> speaking to people, knowing their names, smiling at them, knowing enough about them personally to ask questions about their personal life. That's really important. It's got to be you, it's got to be authentic, you can't bullshit people, you can't . . . those relationship go a long way. Not only do you get to know and understand each other, but it is like money in the bank. At some point you are going to have to cash in, and the more you have in the bank the easier it will be. Not that I am insincere about the relationships, but down the road they help you do the big, important, equity stuff.

These proactive strategies created time, emotional space, and necessary support to continue their equity and justice work. In a sense they reinvented key parts of their jobs to emphasize their social justice focus. The principals did not believe that these strategies made their work easy. They also did not believe that these proactive strategies alone were enough to sustain them in their quest for social justice as educational leaders. Additionally, they were purposeful about using coping strategies for their lives outside of school.

Coping strategies. In addition to proactive strategies the principals identified coping strategies that helped them continue to advance social justice in the face of countervailing pressures. I define coping strategies as strategies that allowed the principals to generally get through the day, week, or school year. These strategies did not necessarily help them with their daily principal work, but included ways the principals sustained and nourished themselves. They identified their coping strategies as prioritizing their life outside of school, utilizing mindful diversions, engaging in regular physical activity, providing for others, and employing potentially self-destructive behaviors.

These leaders worked incredibly long hours, but they learned to purposefully set aside time not to work or scheduled time with family and friends. Principal Natalie shared,

> [I] try to separate my personal life and professional life; it's a huge strategy. That means that after 60 or 70 hours of work, I don't want to talk about work any more. . . . [For example] I will put, like once a month I'll put on my calendar "university" in the afternoon. What that means is if I get through that week and nothing huge has happened and I've got everything I need done, I'm going home that afternoon. I feel guilty about it, but not guilty enough not to do it [laughs].

Principal Eli discussed the mindful diversions he used to keep himself sane. Commenting on what these included for him, he stated, "It's everything, how you live your life. . . . I eat right, I cook with my wife, I like listening to jazz music, I go to jazz clubs to clear my mind. . . . I read for me, not for school, but not enough."

Principal Meg shared her strategy of carving out time weekly for physical activity. She explained that she takes, "yoga weekly, [and goes] running probably three to four times a week. I run with my sister-in-law, I run with staff members, I run with district people."

The principals also discussed how engaging in service and doing tangible things for other people helped them continue this work. The combination of accomplishing something tangible and the feeling of helping someone else made this coping strategy work for these principals. Principal Natalie explained,

> We mow lawns for people, we make sure that they have what they need, most of our neighbors are over 80 years old, and those things make me feel like I've done something. Not only the work at my school, which I don't feel some days is satisfying, or I've done anything right. When I get home and I'm able to do something to make someone else happier or make their life easier, I walk around the block, clean up the side, the side of the road every damn night I'm able to get out there. That's probably twice a week I get out and clean up the road for 3 miles and things like that, that are tangible and I can see and, and not having to wait 8 years so once a kid graduates and tells me they learned something. I can see it and that's important. . . . I can do this, I can mow your lawn and I can help you pack, I can make you a cake, I can do stuff that makes you feel better and makes me feel better in return.

Finally, the principals discussed strategies that they employed that included potentially harmful behaviors, which they purposefully used while facing tremendous resistance. In discussing how they dealt with the magnitude of pressure, they provided responses such as, "I work more hours," "I worked longer," "I work harder." Many of these principals stated that the normal workweek consisted of 65 to 80 work hours. In that case working more hours meant an even longer week of upwards of 90 hours.

Three of the principals discussed using alcohol as a coping strategy. They shared about the tendency to drink alcohol as a way to feel alive and to cope with the foreboding resistance they experienced. One principal shared, "I was definitely heading down the alcoholic path fast. . . . I mean I started drinking more than I should. I just needed the inner turmoil to ease up, and I needed to feel funny and full of life again."

These principals committed to social justice in this study developed and used a variety of coping strategies to keep advancing this work. These strategies allowed them to help maintain their personal sanity and helped clear their minds from the struggles at school. These principals combined personal coping strategies that helped make them "feel whole" and helped "maintain some semblance of sanity" with the previously discussed proactive strategies. It is important to note that there was a great amount of personal

sacrifice in this work. Whereas turning to alcohol (or even working harder) might seem like an escape, it was a way for them to "numb" the oppressive reality they were experiencing. In other words, in addition to using strategies they were giving to the point where their own well-being was secondary to the well-being of others. They would rather self-destruct than see their marginalized students be destroyed?

In sum, the 7 principals developed and used both coping and proactive strategies to advance social justice in the face of countervailing pressures. They attributed their success in making their schools more equitable at least in part to the strategies they developed.

Toward a Theory of Social Justice Leadership

These principals provided compelling data about their experiences leading for social justice. Through the analysis of their experiences, it can be understood that they went to great lengths to enact social justice and demonstrated success in that area. It is also clear that in their efforts to create more equitable and just schools, they faced formidable resistance. To continue enacting social justice, these leaders shared specific strategies they developed to sustain themselves both professionally and personally. In adding to the growing body of literature on leadership for social justice, the experiences these principals described can be understood as a three pronged framework of resistance:

1. *the resistance principals enact* against historic marginalization of particular students,
2. *the resistance principals face* as a result of their social justice agenda, and
3. *the resistance principals develop* to sustain their social justice agenda in the face of resistance.

The principals in this study described specific ways that they each enacted resistance. They described in detail the resistance they faced and the toll that resistance had on them. They were clear about the resistance they developed that aided them in continuing their social justice work. These leaders were steadfast advocates for social justice and paid a high price for that work. They purposefully took steps in professional and personal self-care to keep the toll and the formidable resistance they faced at bay. In doing so, they made significant accomplishments in creating more just schools.

Whereas this initial study sheds light on principals' leadership for social justice, future research is needed in a number of additional areas in working

toward a theory of social justice leadership. Areas for further research could involve an expansion of the current study to include rural, suburban, and more racially diverse leaders; further investigation into the critical leadership traits these leaders described as salient to their ability to enact justice; a deeper look at social justice leaders to include various stakeholder perspectives and the gritty experiences of social justice leadership; a purposeful examination of the toll on social justice leaders; investigation of the change process in social justice work in schools; and examination and evaluation of an equity focus of administrator-preparation programs. Addressing these research topics will shed further light on social justice educational leadership.

Although there are numerous implications for practice from this study, most of which can be inferred from the data and findings presented above, I have chosen to focus specifically on implications for administrator-preparation programs. The graduate experience in educational leadership can have a significant impact on the development and cultivation of social justice leaders in education.

Implications for Preparation

In light of both the literature attesting to the lack of focus on equity issues within administrator-preparation programs (Brown, 2004; Bell et al., 2002; Dantley, 2002; Lyman & Villani, 2002; Mackinnon, 2000; Marshall, 2004a; Rapp, 2002; Rusch, 2004; Solomon, 2002) and the data from this study reaffirming that gap, implications for administrator preparation become critical to this work. In wrestling with the data from this study I have come to a number of salient conclusions about administrator preparation.

The principals in this study felt that their preparation programs did not assist them in their ability to lead for social justice. However, the growing discussion on how to prepare leaders for social justice (Brown, 2004; Marshall, 2004b; Parker et al., 2005; Shoho, 2006; Tillman, Brown, Campbell-Jones, & Gonzalez, 2006), is moving the field in a direction that may prepare more leaders who are both capable and driven to do this work.

I see the implications for preparation from this work as adding to that conversation and do not pretend that those shared here are definitive. I recognize that preparing social justice leaders is complex and multidimensional, and cannot be seen as a prescribed list of tasks merely to check off. When taken holistically, these findings suggest that preparation programs need to prepare social justice leaders to both enact and develop resistance in the face of significant barriers.

Developing the Capacity to Enact Resistance

Marginalized students do not receive the education they deserve unless purposeful steps are taken to change schools on their behalf with both equity and justice consciously in mind. Similarly, developing the capacity to enact resistance is paramount in educational leadership-preparation programs. Administrators must be at the front of the line in transforming schools into more equitable and just places. With this social justice purpose clearly in mind, enacting resistance requires that future administrators develop a reflective consciousness centered on social justice and a broader knowledge and skill base. Developing reflective consciousness contains four components that can be marshaled to enact resistance and lead toward social justice:

1. "learning to believe the dream is possible" (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003, p. 9),
2. models of equity and justice in practice,
3. deepening administrators' knowledge of self, and
4. "rebellious, oppositional imaginations" (Rapp, 2002, p. 226).

To enact the resistance necessary to advance social justice for marginalized students, preparation programs need to pass on to students a broader, more relevant knowledge and skill base. Concurring with Marshall (2004a), the complexity of advancing social justice relies on understanding content, language, and the integration of topics not traditionally central to administrator preparation. The principals in this study possessed knowledge and skills in the following areas that made advancing social justice possible and should be seen as implications for content in preparation programs. These areas included special education, ELLs, curriculum, differentiation and teaming, using data, presentation skills, race, poverty, working with diverse families, and taking a global perspective. Along with the ability to enact resistance through enhancing reflective consciousness and developing a broader knowledge and skills base, future leaders require the skills to develop their own resistance and resilience as they face barriers to social justice.

Building a Capacity to Develop Resistance

It is irresponsible to prepare leaders to take on enormous challenges and face significant resistance without understandings of how to weather the storms that will result. However, little literature exists (Langer & Boris-Schacter, 2003; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003) on the strategies that principals use to advance social justice in the face of resistance. Using this literature and the strategies from this study, faculty in preparation programs can begin to create a space for the discussion and development of strategies to continue

to advance justice in the face of resistance. Although the strategies the principals in this study discussed should not be used as a checklist for administrator-preparation programs, they offer a starting place for focusing on leadership skills to deal with, manage, and cope with resistance. Whereas the work of leading for social justice is never easy, the principals in this study stated that they saw more success and felt a reduced personal toll and were somewhat less discouraged once they formulated and adopted strategies, both proactive and coping, to deal with the resistance they faced. Creating a space to wrestle with developing resistance can provide future administrators the opportunity to be a step ahead of the resistance they will face and address proactively issues of burnout that can impact social justice leaders.

In sum, reexamining and rethinking preparation programs requires both the will and steadfast commitment on the part of university faculty to center educational leadership on social justice. Graduate preparation programs committed to developing social justice leaders can and do play a major role in helping future administrators develop their abilities to both enact and develop resistance in service of advancing social justice and educating marginalized and indeed all students.

A FINAL WORD—"BUT THAT'S JUST GOOD LEADERSHIP"

Inspired by Ladson-Billings's (1995) article entitled "But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy," I make a case that the leadership described in this article is more than good leadership. In her article Ladson-Billings described that in sharing her work on culturally relevant pedagogy, the usual response she received was "But that's just good teaching" (p. 159). Ladson-Billings proposed that the historic norm of what is considered good teaching must be reexamined to understand that teaching that does not serve African American students and other students of color well, cannot be described or understood as good teaching. She asserted that culturally relevant pedagogy is what good teaching should be and must be made available to all children.

In a similar experience to what Ladson-Billings (1995) described, while presenting the preliminary findings to graduate classes and at lectures at universities across the country, I without fail received the comment, "what you are describing is good leadership," or "these principals typify what the literature on leadership describes as good leaders." I listened and did not agree. In reflecting on these comments, I will articulate some of the distinctions I see between these social justice leaders and what is traditionally seen as "good leadership" in Table 3. I would emphatically argue that social justice leader goes beyond good leadership.

TABLE 3
Distinctions Between a Good Leader and a Social Justice Leader

Good Leader	*Social Justice Leader*
Works with subpublics to connect with community	Places significant value on diversity, deeply learns about and understands that diversity, and extends cultural respect
Speaks of success for all children	Ends segregated and pull-out programs that prohibit both emotional and academic success for marginalized children
Supports variety of programs for diverse learners	Strengthens core teaching and curriculum and insures that diverse students have access to that core
Facilitates professional development in best practices	Embeds professional development in collaborative structures and a context that tries to make sense of race, class, gender, and disability
Builds collective vision of a great school	Knows that school cannot be great until the students with the greatest struggles are given the same rich opportunities both academically and socially as their more privileged peers
Empowers staff and works collaboratively	Demands that every child will be successful but collaboratively addresses the problems of how to achieve that success
Networks and builds coalitions	Seeks out other activist administrators who can and will sustain her or him
Uses data to understand the realities of the school	Sees all data through a lens of equity
Understands that children have individual needs	Knows that building community and differentiation are tools to ensure that all students achieve success together
Works long and hard to make a great school	Becomes intertwined with the life, community, and soul of the school

Social justice in schools has not happened by chance. It takes more than what traditionally has been understood as good leadership to achieve greater equity. To be clear, the leadership described in this article goes beyond what has been seen as good leadership and raises the challenge to recast good leadership as leadership for social justice. Similar to Ladson-Billings (1995) argument for a redefining of "good teaching," leadership that is not focused on and successful at creating more just and equitable schools for marginalized students is indeed not good leadership. I caution us all to consider that decades of good leadership have created and sanctioned unjust and inequitable schools. The kind of leadership that needs to be defined and discussed as good leadership is the leadership the principals in this study have pioneered, leadership centered on enacting social justice, and leadership that creates equitable schools. Social justice leadership is indeed what good leadership should be. The social justice leadership described in this article gives vivid examples of what is possible, what is necessary, and what is good—socially just—leadership.

NOTES

1. Fine (1994) further explains 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." This study used a combination of the four strategies Fine described but primarily used the first two.

2. The methodology borrows from the tradition of autoethnography and self-study (Anderson, 1996; Anderson, Herr, & Nehlen, 1994; Anderson & Jones, 2000; Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Church, 1995; Cole & Knowles, 2001; Ellis, 1997; Ellis, 2004; Fine, 1994; Graham, 1991; Meneley & Young, 2005; Reed-Danahay, 2001; Tierney, 1998). Autoethnography (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001;Cole & Knowles, 2001; Ellis, 1997; Ellis, 2004; Meneley &Young, 2005; Reed-Danahay, 2001; Tierney, 1998), autobiography (Church, 1995; Graham, 1991), and reflective practitioners research (Anderson, 1996; Anderson et al., 1994; Anderson & Jones, 2000) are growing in their acceptance and use as modes of inquiry. In fact, the Self-Study Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association is one of the largest special interest groups of the association (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001).

3. In studying social justice leaders, I coded and analyzed the data using the three guiding research questions as a starting place. The deductive analysis (Erickson, 1986; Graue & Walsh, 1997; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) began with selective coding, which Strauss and Corbin describe as "the process of integrating and refining theory" (p. 143). The deductive or selective codes mirrored the three forms of resistance in the conceptual framework. Deductively, I coded the data according to (a) the ways principals enacted social justice, (b) the resistance the principals faced, and (c) the strategies the principals developed. From there I used axial coding, which is "the process of relating categories to subcategories" (Strauss & Corbin, p. 230), to further my analysis of the three forms of resistance. Additionally, I used two additional deductive codes: the principals' background and the influences on their understanding and calling to enact social justice.

The inductive analysis began with open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) of information the principals shared that did not fit into the deductive codes. Again, I used axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to delve deeper into data that did not fit the initial framework. For example, the toll the resistance had on these leaders that is discussed later in the findings did not fit into the deductive codes. I began by open coding this toll but refined that analysis through the use of axial codes.

4. I kept a field log and use a tape recorder to ensure the reliability of the information. The interviews were transcribed and coded. Seven principals were studied to provide me with multiple sources of information supporting the validity of the data. I developed themes only when I could triangulate them across the experiences of at least 3 principals. These procedures fit Crowson's (1993) description of triangulation of data as "the use of multiple sources of data" (p. 188).

Clarifying and revisiting ideas with the principals was an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of who they are and what they do. Providing my understanding to them of what they said and sharing my analytical thoughts and even transcripts from our interviews made opportunity for ongoing discussion, checking, rechecking, and listening. Glesne (1999) refers to this as member checks. I brought the principals together for a group meeting at the conclusion of the study to review and discuss my work. This provided my analysis with their important insight about this group of leaders and the research process. These essential pieces of my methodology maintain the importance of the individual participants and their insights and views in the ongoing work of the study.

Giving attention to the principals' backgrounds and beliefs as well as my own assumption and convictions was essential to this study and to maintaining trustworthiness; Eisenhart and Howe (1992) characterize this as an "alertness to and coherence of prior knowledge" (p. 62). This reflective component about the participants' perceptions, beliefs, and worldviews was essential to the critical theory underpinnings of this study.

5. The principals were selected for the study based on the following four criteria. The principals (a) led a public school; (b) possessed a belief that promoting social justice is a driving force behind what brought them to their leadership position; (c) made issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically marginalizing factors central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision; and (d) had evidence to show that their work had produced a more just school.

6. Whereas I see this as a limitation of the study and an area for future research, it also demonstrates that social justice and equity work is not and should not be limited to leaders of color.

7. The principals provided anecdotal data as well as scores and charts from state and local testing. The state test data were verified through their state educational agency.

8. Because of the sensitive nature of these types of resistance, to further protect the principals' anonymity I will not use even their pseudonyms in this section but only refer to individual leaders as one principal.

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