WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL:

A CASE STUDY IN THE ENACTMENT OF RAWLSIAN SOCIAL JUSTICE

AT LAFAYETTE HIGH SCHOOL

BY

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

With Liberty and Justice for all:
A Case Study in the Enactment of Rawlsian Social Justice at Lafayette High School

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The public school system in the United States is a critical microcosm of society. For far too many students, their school experiences are marked by negative and inequitable treatment on a regular, and often times, daily basis (Brown, 2006). While many students experience hostile conditions, current research suggests that schools may be transformed for the benefit of all students when leaders, teachers, and students embrace a culture of social justice imbedded in fairness, equality, and democracy for all students (Brown 2004; 2006, Marshall & Oliva, 2010, Opfer, 2006, Ottley, 2007, Riehl, 2000, Russo, 2006, Scheurich & McKenzie, 2006, Theoharis, 2008; 2009). Through the concepts outlined in John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice,* this dissertation begins to develop a more complete profile of a public high school enacting the principles of fairness and equality through advancing political and social stability that is well ordered and designed to promote social justice for the total school program (Rawls, 1971; 2001).

Dedication:

This dissertation is dedicated in loving memory to my grandmother,

Viola I. Robinson

1924-2011

An incredibly brave and strong woman who always believed in me, proved that you can always beat the odds, and who has left an indelible mark on who I am as a father, husband, son, and grandson.

You continue to inspire me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend gratitude to my parents, Peter and Irene Giarrizzo for instilling in me a strong value structure and the courage to stand up for what I believe in. They inculcated in me an awareness of the critical importance of education and how it can shape your life. It has indeed shaped mine in the most positive ways. My dad is always proud of me, but I'm even more proud of him.

I am the most grateful to my husband, partner, and best friend, Philip Shiffman who has supported me for far too many years in getting this dissertation completed. He is and remains the very best part of me, has been a light for me on my darkest days and always inspires me to be a better man. Finally, I wish to thank my sons, Matthew and Jake for being so patient while I've worked on this research and for being my greatest fan base. Your talents are far too great to mention and you guys are absolutely everything to me. It is quite a humbling experience to be your father.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Justice is the first virtue of social institutions…each person

possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare

of society as a whole cannot override. (Rawls, 1971, p. 3)

For public schools to strive towards a fuller conceptualization of social justice for all

students, it is important that these tenets of social justice be recognized and followed. Schools

should promote and respect a deep commitment to caring, respect, equity, fairness, and

democracy, while working to eliminate inequality and divergent opportunities for historically

marginalized groups of students. Yet, schools have proven to be hostile, insensitive places for

many marginalized students since the centralized power structures within public schools tend to

favor white, middle class, heterosexual males (Brown, 2004; 2006, Frattura & Capper, 2007,

Kose, 2009, Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Riehl, 2000). While the state of affairs for marginalized

students may seem grim, a growing body of research posits that schools can, in fact, be

transformed for all students when school leaders, teachers, and students embrace a culture of

social justice imbedded in fairness, equality, and democracy for every student who passes

through its doors (Brown, 2004; 2006, Marshall & Oliva, 2010, Opfer, 2006, Ottley, 2007, Riehl,

2000, Russo, 2006, Scheurich & McKenzie, 2006, Theoharis, 2008; 2009).

Statement of Purpose

This case study sought to understand how a public high school was perceived as

influencing the promotion of social justice, thus leading to the promotion of positive implications

for all students. If the policies and practices that were implemented at Lafayette High School to support the promotion of social justice are better understood, the readers of this study might be able to replicate those characteristics for all students within their respective schools. This case study sought to understand and describe the conditions, policies and practices that exist within Lafayette High School that makes it socially just for all students. I became interested in how public schools that are committed to social justice are perceived by their communities, staffs, and students and wanted to understand how the policies and practices that they implement support the promotion of social justice so that the readers of my study might be able to replicate those characteristics for all students within their respective schools.

Conceptual Framework

In 1971, John Rawls published his seminal work entitled, *A Theory of Justice*. In his work, he posited a philosophy whereby society has a moral imperative to ensure that all of its members have a guaranteed access to a just society where both individual and collective liberty prevails (Rawls, 1971). He asserted that to accomplish this goal, each member of society must accept a basic set of principles that affords individuals the opportunity to enjoy equality and justice that are not susceptible to politics or the greater interests of society at large (Rawls, 1971). These principles are described as inalienable as they supersede the individual and collective interests of society.

Rawls acknowledged that tensions exist within societies pertaining to what is considered just and unjust (Rawls, 1971). Since societies are complex conglomerations of individuals and groups that have their own espoused theories, interests, and goals, all too often definitions of what is characterized as either just or unjust poses tremendous conflict. However, in his

description, Rawls asserted that the concepts of social justice are a primary driver regarding how members of society live their lives as well as the extent to which they may expect to have the same opportunities as all others (Rawls, 1971). This is not to say there will not be inherent inequities. However, the achievement of a socially just society requires its members to acknowledge these existing inequities and then work towards ameliorating them to guarantee each individual equal access to a fundamental set of rights, duties, obligations, and privileges imbedded in fairness that allow every member of society as well as the collective whole achieve at the highest levels imaginable (Rawls, 1971).

In his contemplation of justice, Rawls wrote extensively about conceptualizing justice as fairness (Rawls, 1971). He acknowledged that, by nature, individuals are primarily disinterested in the interests of others (Rawls, 1971). That is to say that not every stakeholder comes with an equal amount of access to justice. Further, he posited that members of society are generally more interested in individual justice versus justice for all if collective justice somehow limits the individual's access to greater life prospects (Rawls, 1971). However, he argued that ultimately, the principles of equal rights for all people have a more pronounced role over producing greater amounts of satisfaction for a greater number of people.

He outlined two essential principles of justice. Rawls first argued that, each person should have an equal right to the same basic liberties (Rawls, 1971). These liberties reference what is tantamount to the United States Bill of Rights since they include among others, important political liberties such as the freedom of speech, assembly, thinking, and the right to own property (Rawls, 1971). These are all described as the most basic civil liberties that members of a society should enjoy regardless of their race, gender, immigrant status, socioeconomic status, or

sexual orientation. Further, it would be intolerable for any member of society to not have access

to these basic liberties.

The second basic principle of justice states that it is inevitable that social and economic

inequalities will exist. However, these inequalities should be structured so that all members of

society can benefit from the inevitable disparities in the distribution of wealth and income.

Furthermore, within a socially just society, positions of power and authority need to be

accessible to all regardless of any other factors (Rawls, 1971). This principle asserts that while it

is unimportant that wealth be evenly distributed, it must be advantageous and accessible to all

members of society and available to all individuals (Rawls, 1971). The concepts of fairness and

equal access to all citizens are two driving principles within the theoretical framework of social

justice as defined by Rawls. He argued that, "an injustice is only tolerable when it is necessary to

avoid an even greater injustice" (Rawls, 1971, p. 4). Thus, if maintaining justice through the

enforcement of an individual's basic rights meant that any particular group would become more

vulnerable as a result of maintaining justice, it would be appropriate to sustain an injustice in

order to protect the safety and security of the individual.

In *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls argued the position that "behind the veil of ignorance, if

individuals did not know what their station of life would be, they would agree to a notion of

justice that was moral and fair" (Chambers, 2012, p. 899). Through a careful analysis, Rawls

examined issues of access to both opportunities as well as basic rights and justice. To that end,

through this study, I sought to ascertain the degree to which a public high school, as a microcosm

of society, employed these basic principles towards the purpose of fostering a well-ordered social

and academic environment that supported all students (Chambers, 2012; Rawls, 1971).

Research Goals

Students and staff within a public school setting would not have the benefit of working within a framework of a veil of ignorance. This became a key component of my research interests as I was interested in the degree to which the teachers and administrators at Lafayette High School sought to provide a level playing field of access to all students. The primary goal of this dissertation was to better understand the interplay between the formal rules and policies that exist at Lafayette High School with the informal practices of the teachers and administrators.

I wanted to gain a greater understanding of how teachers and administrators at this school thought about their respective roles in supporting the complicated needs of their students that aim at the promotion of increased levels of student engagement and achievement. Finally, the behavior and attitudes of teachers and administrators at Lafayette High School were one of my critical research interests. Specifically, I was interested in the role that both the building and district leadership played in shaping the attitudes, behaviors, and priorities at Lafayette High School for the benefit of the student body.

Significance

While this dissertation should be considered a preliminary study, my findings are important and have the potential to spur more research as scholars and/or practitioners begin to synthesize the critical components identified in the literature as they relate to social justice in schools. The concepts of leadership, policy, and curriculum were explored through the lens of Rawls to study the impact of the policies within this one public high school. This study's power lies in the potential it has to begin the development of a more complete profile of a public high school that employs the principles of fairness and equality for all of the students who attend this particular school.

Issues pertaining to transferability are subject to scrutiny in a qualitative study (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). External validity is strengthened within this study through the application of the findings to those concepts, identified within the conceptual framework of the study itself. Given the fact that this study is a single case study and qualitative in nature, my findings may indeed be transferable to other school settings by virtue of the manner in which the results of my study confirm and contribute to the existing literature on the key indicators that promote social justice with schools by school personnel (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Research Question

This qualitative case study sought to understand and describe the policies demonstrated and/or enacted by teachers and administrators in a particular school that make them socially just for all kinds of students. For the purpose of this dissertation, the term policy was defined as the formal rules adopted by the Board of Education, standing practices with the District and/or school, and the enactment of both typical and idiosyncratic practices and/or behaviors by teachers and administrators within this particular school. Through the course of this study, I sought to answer the following research question:

> How do teachers and administrators in this one public high school enact policies aimed at social justice?

I chose to study this topic because I felt strongly that all schools need to be structured so that all students can have equal access to a rich, robust, education that is fair and just. I am interested in studying the existing hegemony associated with the white middle class segment of our country that dominates the development and adoption of public policy within public schools. I am also interested in studying how local school leaders and teachers work to adopt policies and

practices that afford all children the same opportunities to achieve success through the promotion

of safety, equity, and fairness for all in spite of these counter-veiling forces.

Summary of Chapter

Students in public schools in New Jersey between the ages of 6 and 16 are required to

attend school (N.J.S.A. 18A:38-28 through 31). Consequently, each student arrives each day

entitled to a free and appropriate public education regardless of their socioeconomic status, race,

gender, sexual orientation, disability, or any other factor that may shape their personal identity.

This generates an interesting set of circumstances for schools whereby conditions of equal access

need to be paid particular close attention to since students will arrive with varying degrees of

readiness. To avoid issues of oppression, educators need to be cognizant of their roles as

politicians, artists, and advocates for their students. By doing so they may acknowledge the

existence of injustice, wealth, and privilege for the purpose of mitigating issues of oppression

and bringing about enhanced conditions of fairness and equity (van Gorder, 2007).

Public schools need to be structured so that all students can have equal access to a rich,

robust education that is fair and just. Through exposing the existing hegemony associated with

the white middle class segment of our country that dominates the development and adoption of

public policy within schools, I sought to better understand how local school leaders and teachers

at Lafayette High School work to adopt policies and practices that afford all children the same

opportunities to achieve success through the promotion of safety, equity, and fairness for all

students.

An important component of this qualitative dissertation sought to uncover and better

understand how the intended or espoused theories are either in sync with or in direct contrast to

the existing theories of practice that are lived within the organization. The attitudes and perceptions of my research participants emerged as key factors in the success of Lafayette High School. Furthermore, the respect and appreciation for their colleagues as well as the building and district administration became important components as I explored the individual and collective values of my research participants and how these things contributed positively towards the enactment of policies aimed at social justice within Lafayette High School.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Philosophical Context of Rawlsian Social Justice

John Rawls positioned justice as fairness as a central component of his discussion of social justice (Rawls, 1971). As I began to frame both the conceptual and contextual structure of this dissertation, the discussion of social justice within the context of a public school became heavily reliant on the work of John Rawls. While his work explored how government may structure itself to promote conditions of social justice for members of society, I was constantly finding myself drawn to how these same principles might be applied within the constructs of a public school as the Rawlsian framework facilitates the interplay between political and social stability within a well-ordered society (Chambers, 2012, Rogers, 1999).

Through his advancement of the importance of a social contract, Rawls asserts that from behind a veil of ignorance, a position that allows members of society to be stripped of their biases and knowledge of their own personal stations in life, members of society would agree that justice was primarily rooted in morality and fairness (Chambers, 2012; Rawls, 1971, Rogers, 1999). Through this thought experiment, Rawls' challenges his reader to imagine themselves within a completely artificial situation. Rawls' concept of the Original Position asks his readers to imagine themselves denied knowledge of their basic identifiers such as class, skills, age, gender, sexuality, religious views and the conception of the good life. Rawls argues that the principles, which these people would choose to regulate their relations with one another, are definitive of justice (Rogers, 1999). Cognizant of the basic individual liberties of the members of

society, Rawls "tries to show that a well-constituted order can promote the sense of justice that it needs to sustain itself over generations" (Brewer, 2013, p. 190). This presumes that the principles of justice are already strongly imbedded within society and that its members will rely upon their intuitions to make fair and moral choices.

Rawls' argument that a political system that is mindful of the promotion of the principles of liberty and equality and, if applied to schools, may reinforce the ability to support all students (Chambers, 2012; Rawls, 1971). An acknowledgement of the conditions that exist for the privileged provides for the ability to permit inequities through what Rawls calls the Difference Principle (Rawls, 1971). In these cases, inequities are only permissible when they provide benefit to the least advantaged in society, society as a whole or when these inequalities protect the most vulnerable from hardship (Chambers, 2012; Rogers, 1999).

To better understand and implement the principles of social justice as defined by Rawls, public schools must first acknowledge that inequities exist among the student body. It is only when these inequities are acknowledged that school leaders may structure access to programming that enables all students the ability to engage and benefit from the social, academic, and potentially economic goods that public schools are seemingly designed to foster (Chambers, 2012). Justice as fairness is largely about outcomes as much as it is about process and when Rawls' arguments are applied to school systems they provide compelling evidence that students only benefit when the principles of liberty, equity and fairness are both acknowledged and actively implemented for the benefit of all students.

Policy Context of Social Justice within the Research Literature

The public school system in the United States is a critical microcosm of society. As such, a growing body of research is being conducted across the nation that addresses the concepts of social justice in school. For many students, their school experiences are marked by negative and inequitable treatment on a regular, often time daily basis. (Brown, 2006). The lessons that students learn about all types of marginalized groups of students are profound (Blount, 2000). They learn how they are supposed to behave, feel, show emotions, and comport themselves through the words and actions that they are exposed to at school (Blount, 2000). It is the role of the socially just leader to foster a school environment for both staff members and students that encourages safety, equity, and fairness for all (Blount, 2000; Kumashiro, 2000; 2009).

While there are a variety of definitions regarding what exactly social justice means, there is general agreement that the concept of social justice most often pertains to historically marginalized students who are the subjects of oppression (Aleman, 2009; Calderwood, 2003; Dessel, 2010; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Kumashiro, 2000; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Theoharis, 2007; 2009). Furthermore, Marshall and Oliva (2010) synthesize the essential characteristics of social justice leadership to include, "a consciousness of the broader social, cultural, and political contexts of schools; the critique of marginalizing behaviors and predispositions of schools and their leadership; a commitment to the more genuine enactment of democratic principles in schools; a moral obligation to articulate a counter hegemonic vision or narrative of hope regarding education; and a determination to move from rhetoric to civil rights activism" (Marshall & Oliva, 2010, p. 23).

The politics associated with social justice are certainly not new. Social justice theory is a vital concept within a democracy. Since power has historically rested with wealthy Caucasian

men in this country, it is critical that access to power and opportunity transcend gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, dis/ability, immigrant status, culture, or home language (Scheurich & McKenzie, 2006). Therefore, it is important to remember that the key concepts associated with social justice have impacted every society over the course of time (Scheurich & McKenzie, 2006). There has always been a marginalized group of people seeking equity, and there always needs to be a group of socially just activists willing to drive equity forward (Scheurich & McKenzie, 2006). Of equal importance is that while many individuals wish to consider their own actions good, just, and/or right, in order to progress towards more ideal conditions of social justice it is critical that these same individuals firstly acknowledge their own existing biases, and secondly, study those same biases, whatever they may be, and be willing to change. This type of self-reflection is critical to working towards conditions of social justice (Scheurich & McKenzie, 2006).

Similarly, having effective policies in place is critical to the social justice movement. Policy evaluations are highly political and are driven by a multitude of facts that may or may not be focused on student achievement for all students (Opfer, 2006). The outcomes of policy evaluations can have lasting effects on an organization seeking to better align itself with the principles associated with social justice. Similarly, whether or not a policy is acted upon is inherently political and influenced by how an individual's personal beliefs intersect with the political culture (Opfer, 2006). Therefore, it is important for social justice leaders to engage in the political process so that their initiatives to benefit all children can be moved forward. Similarly, it is essential to engage staff in activities and the development of policy and practices that empower them to openly reject any refutation or bias towards minority groups (Sanelli & Perreault, 2001). In this theory, every member of the school community becomes an advocate for

social justice (Sanelli & Perreault, 2001). Existing public school policies are often dictated by

statewide politics and these initiatives may prevent the fostering of social justice in schools. For

example, states that do not guarantee equal protections against discrimination for all minority

groups allow schools to either turn a blind eye to issues of discrimination or engage in

discriminatory practices as a system. Therefore, it becomes even more critical for teachers,

administrators, and policymakers to acknowledge these factors and then seek ways to establish

practices are based in fairness and equality for students.

Historical Context of Social Justice at the Macro Level

In 1954, via *Brown v. Board of Education,* the United States Supreme Court ruled that

racially segregating schools was unconstitutional. This decision has had wide reaching

implications that extend well beyond African Americans because the fundamental governing

principle of separate but equal being unconstitutional could be applied to any group of

individuals (Williamson, Rhodes, & Dunson, 2007). "In 1974, via *Lau v. Nichols*, the 9th United

States District Court ruled that schools were responsible for providing language minority

students equal and comprehensible access to the academic curriculum" (Callahan, Wilkinson, &

Muller, 2010, p. 85). The Supreme Court of the United States in a unanimous decision later

upheld this decision as a statutory right--not a constitutional right. This landmark decision

required schools to establish specific programs for English Language Learners that provided

them with targeted support and services specifically designed for them. Since English Language

Learners must learn both a new language as well as content specific curriculum in English,

conditions are certainly not optimal for the existence of socially just conditions in the absence of

mandated programs and services (Verdugo & Flores, 2007).

English Language Learners are a historically marginalized group of students. Some arrive in this country undocumented, but are still entitled to a free and appropriate public education (Verdugo & Flores, 2007). However, schools remain ill equipped and grounded in a growing xenophobia that pervades schools and leads to conditions of inequality where students do not have access to the same basic opportunities as other students (Verdugo & Flores, 2007). Furthermore, in order to achieve positive school conditions for English Language Learners, school environments that enhance student achievement for all students must be fostered. Unfortunately, many English Language Learners perceive that they are treated unfairly in school, and that their schools have significant gaps in their ability to be nurturing, caring, environments where high academic expectations prevail (Verdugo & Flores, 2007).

The need for federal policy to protect all marginalized youth is critical. This is especially important for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Queer (LGBTQ) youth. LGBTQ youth have used many strategies to demonstrate that their civil rights and right to learn in a safer environment are fundamental. Students who find their civil rights being disregarded may consider using "the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution, state and local antidiscrimination laws, tort law, criminal law, and the federal statute called Title IX" (Buckel, 2000, p. 393). However, since policies pertaining to sexual orientation exist at some state and local levels, it is extremely difficult to apply a consistent standard pertaining to policy since it may change from state to state or even municipality to municipality.

Unlike issues of race, ethnicity, religion, dis/ability, sex and language, there is no federal policy or law specifically banning the discrimination of LGBTQ youth or adults at school (Russo, 2006). Since it is clear that schools are traditionally unsafe places for LGBTQ youth, the need for action in this area is critical (Conoley, 2008, Dupper & Adams, 2002, Kumashiro, 2003,

Macgillivray, 2000, Russo, 2006). Moreover, the need for Boards of Education to adopt specific policies protecting sexual minorities is an even greater concern in the absence of either state or federal laws (Birden, Gaither, & Laird, 2000; Buckel, 2000; Russo, 2006). This is especially important since in many areas of the county, many prospective educators hold negative attitudes towards lesbian and gay people (Birden, Gaither, & Laird, 2000). It is important for public school educators to be forced via policy statements to put aside their own biases when engaging with students.

The State of New Jersey has established a comprehensive set of laws protecting its residents from unwanted discrimination. Failure to comply constitutes breaking the law, leaving the violator subject to penalties imposed by the judicial system. Title 10 of New Jersey law protects the equal rights and privileges of all persons in public places. It states that, "all persons shall be entitled to the full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities and privileges of any places of public accommodation, resort or amusement, subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law and applicable alike to all persons" (http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/Default.asp).

Through the New Jersey Law against Discrimination (LAD), the State of New Jersey "makes it unlawful to subject people to differential treatment based on race, creed, color, national origin, nationality, ancestry, age, sex (including pregnancy), familial status, marital status, domestic partnership or civil union status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, atypical hereditary cellular or blood trait, genetic information, liability for military service, and mental or physical disability, perceived disability, and AIDS and HIV status. The Law Against Discrimination prohibits unlawful discrimination in employment, housing, places of public accommodation, credit and business contracts

(http://www.nj.gov/oag/dcr/law.html). Furthermore, this law provides broad protections for all employees and students within public schools (Eckes & McCarthy, 2008). The comprehensive nature of the law provides sweeping protections for students in the State of New Jersey, virtually rendering discrimination of any kind unlawful. While students in New Jersey benefit from these this law, these protections vary from state to state (Eckes & McCarthy, 2008; Lugg & Tooms, 2011). In addition, Title 2C of New Jersey law makes bias intimidation illegal. This makes the act of committing or conspiring with another to commit with the purpose of intimidating an individual or group of individuals because of race, color, religion, gender, handicap, sexual orientation or ethnicity unlawful.

In 2007, the New Jersey Supreme Court issued a unanimous decision ruling that the Toms River Regional School District in Toms River, New Jersey could be sued for failing to address the harassment of a student based upon his perceived sexual orientation. The case, known as *L.W. v. Toms River* is a landmark case in the State of New Jersey as it finds that school districts are responsible and thus, liable for addressing and putting an end to issues of mistreatment, offensive conduct, and/or harassment in schools (Lugg & Tooms, 2011).

In response to the suicide of Tyler Clementi in 2010, a freshman at Rutgers University who committed suicide after being bullied and harassed by his roommate, Governor Christopher Christie signed into law a bill that strengthened the Anti-Bullying Rights Act. The law mandated training for virtually all school employees regarding issues pertaining to bullying and further mandated the creation of school safety teams in each school in New Jersey. Furthermore, the law provides for the suspension and/or expulsion of students who are found to have engaged in bullying behavior(s) (Lugg & Tooms, 2011). The law provides very specific definitions and guidance to school districts and requires that each school district adopt a comprehensive policy

that is developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders including parents and/or

guardians, school representatives, volunteers, students, administrators and community

representative (http://www.njleg.state.nj.us/Default.asp).

Historical Context of Social Justice at the Micro Level

Various researchers have concluded that among other qualifiers, race, gender, dis/ability,

ethnicity, socioeconomic status, immigrant status, religion, language, sexual orientation, and

sexual identity of students in public schools all potentially contribute to the marginalization of

students who fall into these categories (Aleman, 2009; Brown, 2004; 2006, Calderwood, 2003;

Dessel, 2010, Frattura & Capper, 2007; Kumashiro, 2000; 2001; 2009; Marshall, 2004; Marshall

& Oliva, 2010). This leaves many students in a particularly precarious position since the

hegemony associated with the white, middle class, heteronormative segment of our country

dominates the development and adoption of public policy within schools (Aleman, 2009; Dessel,

2010; Calderwood, 2003; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Kumashiro, 2001; 2009; Marshall, 2004).

School leaders and teachers who will have a positive impact on establishing conditions of social

justice for the students that they serve need to acknowledge the existence of the historically

marginalized groups of students within their schools as well as the prevailing hegemony

associated within the white middle class demographic. They will then be more ably poised to

foster greater opportunities for equality and justice for all of the students who they are charged

with educating.

Access to education is widely considered a means to achieve a higher social status and

upward mobility. However, schools must also be of high-quality and provide equal opportunities

for all students. Social justice theorists do not assert that schools should be blind to race, but

rather, schools should strive to achieve access to an equal and fair educational program without having to abandon their cultural identities or native languages (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Theoharis, 2009). Moreover, to achieve greater progress towards social justice, every effort needs to be made by school personnel to include students in the general population so that the same level of access can be provided to all students (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Theoharis, 2009; Williamson, Rhodes, & Dunson, 2007).

Kozik-Rosabal (2000) conducted a study where she explored the perception of parents as it relates to their own LGBTQ families and/or children. While the parents reported that due to the heterosexist nature of schools their children were either bullied or harassed, the school administrators argued that there were not problems within their schools. Parents saw this behavior as dismissive and inaccurate (Kozik-Rosabal, 2000). "Not only is it assumed that all children are heterosexual but also that traditional stereotypes about gender roles still are dominant in our society. Males are expected to be strong and powerful, whereas females are expected to be supportive and nurturing" (Kozik-Rosabal, 2000, p. 373). Both the adults and students at schools make these assumptions since they are formed at a very young age.

Kozik-Rosabal (2000) introduced the concept of a virtual reality for LGBTQ youth in schools. This means that policy is often inconsistent with actual practice. For example, there are many instances where there are strong policy statements prohibiting harassment within schools, but there are fewer instances where harassment based upon sexual orientation is included within the policy (Kozik-Rosabal, 2000). These kinds of statements are inconsistent within the theoretical framework of social justice since they do not promote fairness and equity for all students. The parents who participated in Kozik-Rosabal's study indicated that they wanted their schools to be more aware of the existing problems that their LGBTQ children face and to make

more timely responses when incidents arise. Furthermore, the parents suggested that the schools engage in professional development and/or collaborate with community agencies to educate teachers and staff members in how to respond to specific issues. It was also suggested that the schools adopt proactive policies that specifically address LGBTQ issues, encourage the creation of Gay Straight Alliances, and make a concerted effort towards changing the attitudes of both students and staff members regarding LGBTQ students (Kozik-Rosabal, 2000).

Schools and school districts need to know if the work they are engaged in towards the development of socially just policies and procedures for all students is effective. Marshall and Oliva (2010) advocate the use of equity audits in schools to measure their effectiveness in the areas of teacher quality, programming, and student achievement (Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004). To engage in an equity audit, a committee of stakeholders would evaluate an existing program, teacher quality or student achievement through the use of data. The committee would be responsible for analyzing the data and then making important decisions regarding the efficacy of the existing equity within the school. For example, an equity committee could take the time to study the student achievement levels of various demographic groups to ascertain whether or not all students are making comparable progress. A data set could be comprised of both local formative assessments and statewide assessment data (Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004).

The Context of School Culture

"In each individual school there is a culture that is owned by that school that embodies its values, norms, and beliefs…the climate of the school can foster resilience or become a risk factor in the lives of people who work and learn in a place called school" (Dupper & Meyer-Adams,

2002, p. 356). The culture of a school is critically important as it guides both the formal and

informal policies and procedures within the school. It will dictate how and why individuals

behave in specific ways. If fostered in a positive way, all students can thrive and achieve in a

safe, supportive environment. However, when these ideals are ignored, the governing principles

can lead to a prevailing school culture where students are likely to become marginalized and

victimized (Dupper & Meyer-Adams, 2002; Macgillivray, 2000; Payne, 2007; Russo, 2006).

Further, certain aspects of school cultures can serve as either barriers or facilitators to

building a supportive school climate for students (Varjas, Graybill, Mayan, Meyers, Dew,

Marshall, Singh, & Birckbichler, 2007). Potential barriers include the prevailing climate in the

school building, religious affiliations of the community, school personnel, and/or parents. In

addition, staff members who fear retribution may also be viewed as barriers since they are unable

to provide resources of support to their students (Varjas, et al., 2007). Potential facilitators are

identified as policies or procedures that exclusively protect students, specific training in issues

related to bullying for students and staff members, outlets for students to express themselves, and

the incorporation of topical social issues into the curriculum (Varjas et al., 2007).

Whether it is in intentional or not, schools often become places where hegemonic

ideology and power structures lead to the causation of further marginalization of students

(Kozik-Rosabal, 2000). Consequently, both students and teachers are likely to be keenly aware

of these power structures and prevailing systems of thought that when left unaddressed erode the

existence of fairness, equity, and justice within the school. Thus, the absence of policies and on-

going, inclusive work that is systematically implemented excludes students from the school

when social and programmatic equality are largely absent from many schools. In addition, there

is often a lack of understanding as to whether existing policies pertain to certain kinds of students

if it is not expressly mentioned. Unfortunately, hurt and danger can be common occurrences for students when either the curriculum, school policies, social events, student clubs, and/or general operations of the school are not inclusive. Further, the policymakers and practitioners in schools must work to mitigate these actions in a comprehensive and methodical manner as it is potentially damaging to students to do nothing at all (Kozik-Rosabal, 2000). Attendance at school is compulsory, and school must be structured in equitable ways that promote acceptance within a safe environment.

Given these above stated factors, it is reasonably to posit that high school is hard. The negotiation of the complex social structures and academic achievement is a hard, complicated journey for many students. It is even more complicated for those students who are part of a historically marginalized demographic group. The rituals that exist within schools are often grounded in heteronormative, sexist, homophobic, and racist principles. The creation of learning environments that are considered safe for all students include the creation of policies and practices that value the differences that exist in and among the student body (Buckel, 2000; Conoley, 2008; Lugg, 1998; 2008; Macgillivray, 2000; Mayo, 2007; Payne, 2007; Russo, 2006). Rawls argues to the importance of the critical need for a social contract that promotes the existence of socially just conditions of morality and fairness among all (Chambers, 2012). Schools must exert effort to protect the liberties of their students, expand opportunities, and promote mutual respect for all students, and thus their ability to access equitable experiences regardless of their backgrounds.

Principals are able to directly and powerfully impact conditions of trust and cooperation where input from teachers and staff members are welcomed and encouraged (Price, 2011). Positive school climates benefit teachers, principals, and students since all are able to prosper

when they are cohesively invested in trust and cooperation as greater levels of loyalty and commitment are evident (Price, 2011). Moreover, when teachers are provided with the autonomy and authority to work towards attaining organizational and instructional goals that are monitored by the principal, outcomes for student achievement and engagement are positively impacted (Price, 2011).

The Context of Shared Values

The collective values and behaviors that are understood and acted upon are powerful indicators of the extent to which a society can employ the principles associated with justice, fairness and equality. While local mores may vary based upon local context, in order for justice as fairness to prevail, several concepts must be well understood by all the members of society. Rawls further posits that a well-ordered society is one that is properly regulated by a shared, public conception of justice (Rawls, 1971; 2001). Consequently, this mutual acknowledgement does not require universal acceptance of a doctrine, but mutual agreement across a broad spectrum on what constitutes agreement regarding the political conceptions of justice. This is an important concept as it generates from a basic structure in society in which all of the complex social institutions are able to function independently while still demonstrating adherence to a publicly known, accepted, and acted upon good that recognizes the principles of justice, enables members of society to regulate and act according to the duties and obligations of these same principles in a broad, sustainable way (Rawls, 2001).

"Justice as fairness regards citizens as engaged in social cooperation, and hence as fully capable of doing so, and this over a complete life" (Rawls, 2001, p. 18). To accomplish this citizens must be able to demonstrate two moral powers (Rawls, 1971; 2001). Firstly, citizens

must be able to show a full capacity to understand, apply, and act from a position of justice that

demonstrates an understanding and awareness of social cooperation (Rawls, 2001). Secondly,

citizens must show a full capacity to possess, modify, and very rationally go about the pursuit of

a concept of good for both themselves and their respective society (Rawls, 2001). Citizens who

demonstrate these two moral powers are able to act with justice and fairness because it honors

and confirms deeply held beliefs that also lead to correlative, publicly accepted and recognized

social cooperation (Rawls, 2001).

The Context of Dispositions

Innate talents and intellect do not necessarily determine personal success. Rather, success

depends upon mindset or the degree to which we believe we have the capacity to cultivate our

intelligence and grow our abilities (Dweck, 2006). When administrators and teachers believe that

student growth and development contribute positively to student achievement within an

incremental lens of change and growth dispositions, core attitudes, values and belief systems are

no longer measured in a static state (Diez, 2007; Dweck, 2006). Both individually and

collectively, teachers and administrators are able to shape the interplay of the acquisition of

knowledge and skill with the facilitation of learning, growth and development in all students

(Diez, 2007).

Effective social justice educators are aware of and analyze the social, cultural, historical,

and political contexts so that oppressive and undemocratic practices can be exposed and acted

upon (Ritchie, 2012). They often work together in critical ways within networks that afford them

opportunities to influence and sustain equitable and just conditions for their students (Ritchie,

2012). These same educators are proactively involved and seek to isolate and end oppressive

conditions for students through actively engaging their students in dialogue around issues related to, but not limited to race, gender, class, socioeconomics, and/or sexuality (Mansfield, 2013; Mthethwa-Sommers, 2013). "Too often, youth- especially those historically marginalized due to race/ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic status- are the subject of policies rather than actors in shaping policy" (Mansfield, 2013, p. 398). While the development of policies aimed at social justice is certainly positive, students often have a limited voice in their development, thus, impeding student voice in policy development (Mansfield, 2013).

A caring disposition is an essential characteristic. Educators who aim to facilitate conditions of social justice care deeply for their students, the marginalized identities of their students, and manner in which their students may be oppressed (Mthethwa-Sommers, 2013). Similar to Rawls, acknowledging the existence of inequity through the Difference Principle and deliberately working to ameliorate those conditions may lead to conditions of social justice for all students. They demonstrate empathy and legitimize those who are either marginalized or oppressed (Kumashiro, 2000; Mthethwa-Sommers, 2013). Further, they demonstrate a heightened awareness as a social justice educator who cares about how and when their students are marginalized or oppressed (Mthethwa-Sommers, 2013). Unfortunately, the teaching from a socially just position can be highly dependent on individual teachers (Philpott & Dagenais, 2012). Thus, it becomes increasingly difficult to ascertain how the principles and qualities associated with social justice are implemented in a systemic manner when teaching is so largely an independent task (Philpott & Dagenais, 2012).

The Context of Oppression

Power and politics play a major role in the advancement of social justice in schools (Rorrer & Lugg, 2006). As a result, school leaders have a responsibility to confront, and address internal and external factors, "that strive to make the masked visible, the taboo central, and the dismissed essential" (Rorrer & Lugg, 2006, p. 6) in order to optimize conditions of fairness and equality for all students within their respective schools. School leaders who value the promotion of social justice will strive to capitalize on these concepts in order to organize schools that seek to empower the marginalized and minimize the existence of the hegemony of traditional power groups within the organizations that they are responsible for leading. Engaging in this type of work is incredibly difficult and does not come without a cost (Aleman, 2009; Calderwood, 2003; Spalding et al., 2010; Theoharis, 2007; 2008; 2009).

Public school leaders have the unique opportunity and moral obligation to provide students with learning environments steeped in equity and fairness. Yet, this is hard work and has the potential to have harmful unintended consequences for the leader (Aleman, 2009; Calderwood, 2003; Spalding et al., 2010; Theoharis, 2007; 2008; 2009). School leaders and teachers must reject any deficit thinking as it relates to the delivery of the curriculum. The unwritten, hidden curriculum often implicitly and explicitly silences the oppressed since scores of differences are patently excluded from textbooks in favor of a white, American, middle class, heterosexual male (Dessel, 2010; Kumashiro, 2001). There is a great deal of research that explores the various ways that oppressive conditions associated with race, class, gender, dis/ability, and/or sexual orientation impact the ways that schools function as well as the critical approaches that school staff members can take to combat conditions of oppression (Kumashiro, 2001). As a result, it is critically important that leaders for social justice as well as teachers

embrace the position that in addition to delivering a core curriculum, they are also responsible for challenging oppression within their schools as a critical component to their delivery of the core curriculum (Kumashiro, 2001).

Establishing a school structure that advocates a theory of anti-oppressive education is a lofty goal. To begin to address the ways in which oppression rears itself in schools, researchers and practitioners must attempt to gain a working understanding of what constitutes oppression and then find ways to address and minimize it (Kumashiro, 2000). To best understand what oppression is, one must first seek to understand the oppressed. Kumashiro (2000) posits that public schools are places where the oppressed students are treated badly. He refers to these students as others. In schools, their peers, and sometimes their teachers and/or administrators oppress the other students.

To attain real social justice, Kumashiro (2000) argues that there are four approaches to anti-oppressive education. Schools must provide education for the other so that the experiences of marginalized students can improve though minimizing the negative actions and/or inactions by educators. Discreet instruction and education about the other is also critical. This type of instruction should be intended to minimize stereotypes, dispel myths, and to increase knowledge and awareness about the oppressed. Thirdly, to understand why groups of students are oppressed it is important to study and understand why certain privileged groups enjoy their hegemony. Furthermore, it is important to critique the group of privilege so that structures of social justice can be transformed to more socially just environments. Lastly, education that allows students and society to overcome resistance, desire change, and embrace crisis as a means to an end will lead to increased social justice in schools (Kumashiro, 2000).

The Context of Local Leadership

School leaders who embrace social justice are leaders who believe in the notions of fairness and justice as moral imperatives. The notion that the fostering of concepts of fairness, justice, and equality are integral moral components of the educational process elevates the level of individual and collective responsibility towards achieving this goal (Calderwood, 2003). Furthermore, no member of a moral community can ignore or marginalize any segment of the community if that community is to be successful. Similar to the work of John Rawls, the work within a moral community is focused on ensuring that injustices are eradicated in the true interest of justice, fairness, and equality (Asher, 2007; Calderwood, 2003, Rawls, 1971). To accomplish this lofty task, school leaders must identify the factors that can prevent social justice and then work to secure consensus around moving the moral work forward. These organizations have shared goals and visions that seek to eliminate oppression (Calderwood, 2003).

When social justice is applied in schools, fairness and democracy prevails. "Social Justice supports a process built on respect, care, recognition, and empathy" (Theoharis, 2007, p. 223). Sadly, issues related to social justice have been historically neglected. They have been particularly neglected as they relate to individuals of color, females, LGBTQ people, and other marginalized groups of individuals. Public schools need to be structured so that all students, regardless of their minority status should be provided with the same access to a high quality education without fearing that the school system will promote or advance any particular lifestyle or belief system. Rather, the academic, co-curricular, and athletic programs should be implemented with tolerance and in a non-threatening manner (Macgillivray, 2000). Silencing groups of people is disruptive, unsettling, and it is a means by which power can be retained by those who possess it. However, fundamentally, social justice and the promotion of a social

justice agenda are intended to disrupt normalcy because the widely accepted notion of normalcy is rather oppressive (Kumashiro, 2003).

Exemplary, courageous leaders are required to implement and sustain positive change in schools (Theoharis, 2009). Since social justice leaders make their prime mission to challenge injustice in the face of extreme resistance and many barriers, the work can become personally exhausting and with political risk. They understand the complex nature of their work and actively seek to acquire, develop, and refine a core set of competencies that fosters a climate of belonging and inclusion within their respective schools, leads to higher levels of student achievement for all students, and provides opportunity and access to coursework, pedagogy and curriculum that is appropriately rigorous (Theoharis, 2009). These leaders actively work to ensure that this happens for all students regardless of their race, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation and/or any other identifying factor of their personhood.

George Theoharis (2008) describes a study of seven building principals who all worked towards the promotion of schools that are equitable, excellent, and socially just. He describes the barriers that these principals were faced with from a variety of sources, and noted that the leaders he studied who were committed to this work encountered barriers and conflict within every facet of the organizations that they were charged with leading (Theoharis, 2008). As a result, in his quest to determine the resistance factors that principals committed to social justice endure, his findings posit that regular resistance was expected from the school/community, Board of Education, district office, administrative colleagues, state and federal regulations, principal preparation programs, and even themselves as they fought against the pervasive feelings of discouragement and feelings of personal expense of this type of work (Theoharis, 2008).

Not only do administrators need to be aware of the existence of the prevailing resistance, but they also need to develop the skills to be able to manage the resistance so that they can continue to advance their agendas (Theoharis, 2008). School leadership that places a primary focus on social justice and the notion that student achievement will be enhanced for even the most marginalized students is hard work. It requires levels of tenacity and insight that will allow the individual to endure intensive resistance with the expectation that all students can thrive in public schools despite who they are or where they come from (Kumashiro, 2000, Theoharis, 2008).

These are lofty, yet attainable goals that require strategic leadership that places value on affirming, supporting, and empowering schools where the status quo is unacceptable because it oppresses large blocs of students (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005; Kumashiro, 2000). Given the heterosexism and politics involved within schools, these goals are substantial to implement, but gravely necessary. School leaders who promote social justice engage in both inclusiveness and activism on behalf of their students (Cambron-McCabe & McCarthy, 2005). Therefore, school leaders must be prepared to assume roles that are designed to criticize the existing conditions in order to expose the social inequities and transform schools. "Social justice takes good leadership and reframes good leadership as leadership that fosters and encourages leadership for social justice characterized by what is possible, necessary, and good for all students" (Theoharis, 2007, p. 253).

To lead public schools that serve all children, leaders must provide rich educational opportunities for all students that are inclusive in nature (Frattura & Capper, 2007; McKenzie et al., 2004; Theoharis, 2009). Inclusive education is most commonly linked to special education and students with disabilities. However, when analyzed through a more expansive social justice

lens, the concept becomes more powerful. Many school reform models have embraced these concepts as they are focused on raising the levels of achievement for all students (Frattura & Capper, 2007). Inclusive education has the potential to benefit all children as it affords them equal access to the total school program.

Social justice leaders can use inclusive education as a means to build strong programs, provide opportunities for teaming, and shift their schools to one that is collaborative in its structure (Theoharis, 2009). When children are removed from the general program they are essentially robbed of their access to the general program, and thus further marginalized since they are not provided access to the same rigorous programs as their non-marginalized peers (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Theoharis, 2009). Thus, the creation of a service model program that is integrated fosters a socially just school that does not simply tolerate students with differences; it embraces them within the overall program of the school community (Marshall & Oliva, 2010).

Teachers play a critical role in fostering equitable conditions through the teaching and learning process in their respective classrooms. It is essential that students experience conditions of fairness and equality at the classroom level (Theoharis, 2009). All students must have access to a guaranteed, viable curriculum that is fair and equitable for all students. Teachers must possess skills that enable them to teach well across a broad range of student needs. "Furthermore, the implicit curriculum of schools refers to the underlying messages transmitted in teachers' behavior about power relationships and their beliefs about students' ethnicity, language diversity, and learning styles" (Dessel, 2010, p. 414). These are powerful messages that are sent to students, and need to be acknowledged and dispelled. School leaders need to confront these issues so that they can be ultimately eliminated within classrooms. These concepts are also

highly applicable in the domains of gender, race, and sexual orientation. Teachers and other

public school personnel must reject any deficit thinking as it relates to the delivery of the

curriculum. The unwritten, hidden curriculum often implicitly and explicitly silences the

oppressed since scores of differences are patently excluded from textbooks in favor of a white,

American, middle class, heterosexual male (Apple, 2004; Dessel, 2010; Kumashiro, 2001).

The overt and covert curriculum in schools profoundly shapes the experience of all

students (Apple, 2004). Thus, the interplay of certain ideologies and structures of hegemony

contribute to the formal operations within a school as they define the normative conceptions of

the culture, shared values, and operational practices of a particular school (Apple, 2004). Since

the values, priorities, and morals of a community are prone to great variability, the hidden

curriculum is largely a local and/or regional phenomenon and can vary within many constructs

and contexts (Apple, 2004). The hidden curriculum can oftentimes serve as the defining factor(s)

for all of the historical, social, and intellectual knowledge within a school. For example, the

cultural, economic, and/or social values that are taught through the lens of the formally adopted

curriculum invariably marginalize and alienate certain groups of students as there is an

assumption that these values are collectively shared (Apple, 2004).

Those students who do not conform to these standing ideological hegemonies are

potentially subsequently oppressed, isolated, marginalized, and effectively socially and

intellectually controlled by those who hold institutional power (Apple, 2004; Kumashiro, 2001;

Dessel, 2010). Thus, conformity to prevailing ideology and the manner in which this directs the

implementation of the curriculum is profound for students and teachers as it contributes to a

social order within a school (Apple, 2004). The hidden curriculum has the potential to invalidate

the political and social stability that is a critical component of a well-ordered society (Apple,

2004; Dessel, 2010; Rawls, 1971; 2001). Challenges to both the overt and covert curriculum are necessary and policymakers and practitioners ought to be questioning who schools are really designed to work for and the extent to which schools are designed to work for all students if they are to be structured in ways that afford all students equal opportunities to access curricula that is relevant and not designed to reinforce the maintenance and development of normative constructs imbued with hegemony (Apple, 2004).

The Context of Oppression and False Niceties

It is critically important that leaders for social justice as well as teachers embrace the position that, in addition to delivering a core curriculum, they are also responsible for challenging oppression within their schools as a critical component to their delivery of the core curriculum (Kumashiro, 2001). For example, there are many social studies textbooks in the United States that do not acknowledge the ways that the working class was exploited when celebrating the achievements of the industrial revolution (Kumashiro, 2001). By exposing all sides of issues within the curriculum all students will have greater access to understanding the concepts associated with oppression and the effect that it has on historically oppressed groups of people.

Oppression can take many forms. Ironically, problems arise in schools when the issue of niceness is not critically examined (Marshall & Theoharis, 2007; Ottley, 2007; Slobodzian & Lugg, 2006). The pressure for all people to get along and the avoidance of having to confront difficult issues can oftentimes lead to a culture of niceness that oppresses marginalized students in ways that are overlooked because nobody is addressing the existing problems. This culture is described as a thick veneer that allows schools to avoid engaging in the hard work of addressing

oppressive conditions, and in fact, allows schools to maintain the status quo (Ottley, 2007). The problems can be seen, but they are so deeply ingrained in the culture of the school that this veneer of nicety allows schools to avoid engaging in substantive, difficult conversations regarding the ways that humans interact within a school (Ottley, 2007). A culture of niceness leads to apathy, and whether it is intentional or not, interferes with a school's ability to diminish the negative impact of marginalized students experiencing continued isolation, marginalization, and no effective process for addressing the underlying concerns that exist within a school organization (Ottley, 2007).

Leaders for social justice must be able to explore the tensions that exist between what is equitable versus what is equal. This is an important distinction as it forces leaders to study and expose their own core beliefs regarding the interplay of fairness and sameness (Marshall & Theoharis, 2007). This type of reflective analysis forces leaders to identify issues of racism, classism, sexism, and/or other biases in a meaningful ways. Furthermore, they challenge prevailing propensities to be nice and not provocative enough to move towards more equitable practices and behaviors which have the ability to challenge basic dispositions of politeness and niceness with actions that force leaders to examine their own ability to build accessible, socially just schools (Marshall & Theoharis, 2007; Ottley, 2007).

Leadership for social justice seeks to utilize the problems and conflicts inherent in school to bring about positive change in school cultures (Aleman, 2009). In doing so, leaders should see problems as opportunities to shift the cultures of their buildings so that meaningful, substantive change can occur for the benefit of all students. Through understanding conflict better, leaders for social justice will be better positioned to leverage it to their advantage (Aleman, 2009; Spalding et al., 2010). However, the work associated with social justice leadership is highly

emotional (Marshall & Oliva, 2010). It requires great tenacity and the ability to manage a full

range of emotions that encourage and protect fairness and equality for all students. The change

process in school can be fraught with fear and anxiety among the various stakeholders. Effective

leaders for social justice will study their organizations and implement change in a thoughtful

way. However, leaders for social justice are eager to initiate change since they are keenly aware

of the moral imperatives associated with it (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Marshall & Oliva, 2010;

Theoharis, 2008; 2009).

The context of Transformative Leadership and Pedagogy

The role that school leaders play is critically important in shaping a school grounded in

the principles of social justice (Riehl, 2000). Schools require transformative leadership that is

willing to challenge the prevailing practices that are designed to accommodate white, English

speaking, middle class, heterosexual males (Brown, 2004; 2006; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Kose,

2009; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Riehl, 2000). To accomplish this, school principals need to

engage a broad spectrum of stakeholders to begin to build a culture of change that will lead to the

inclusive and socially just opportunities for all students. This requires acknowledging that many

practicing school administrators take conservative, often repressive stances in their work (Riehl,

2000). Many public schools continue to function in a virtual reality (Kozik-Rosabal, 2000)

whereby school administrators pretend to run schools that are inclusive; however, in practice

they are intolerant and rather biased (Riehl, 2000). These mores need to be challenged so that

students will have greater opportunities to thrive.

Moreover, public school leaders must be agile and reflective in their work so that they are

able to employ strategies that promote advocacy through a critical lens that promotes the just and

equal learning for all students (Riehl, 2000). This needs to be accomplished both inside and

outside of the school. Through building relationships between school and various community

resources, school leaders increase their opportunities for meeting the complex diverse needs of

their student bodies. It is important for school leaders to possess skills in how to strategically

leverage the resources available to them in order to best meet the needs of all of their students. It

is unreasonable to expect that an individual school would have the vast and highly specialized

resources to meet the competing needs and interests of so many marginalized groups of children.

However, it is completely reasonable to expect that the same schools should have leaders who

have the political, social, and moral acumen to supplement their existing resources by seeking

external support to close existing gaps.

Brown posits that, "effective leaders take responsibility for their learning, share a vision

for what can be, assess their own assumptions and beliefs, and understand the structural and

organic nature of schools" (Brown, 2004, p. 78). The hegemonic structures that currently exist in

schools must be challenged, and they must be challenged by leaders who are able to

acknowledge that change is necessary if schools are to be able to meet the needs of all students in

socially just ways. Moreover, school leaders must be able to unpack the highly complicated

components of gender, race, class, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and homosexuality so that

students and educators can be more open to acknowledging fairness and equality as it relates to

marginalized populations and the existing power structures in schools (Asher, 2007).

Rusch (2004) concludes that issues related to power undermine the advancement of social

justice in schools. She posited that, "as faculty and students attempt to navigate across and within

differences, power and privilege related to gender, race, and status become mitigating

factors…that leads to fault lines…that serve as points of rupture between socially organized

practices and daily lived experiences" (Rusch, 2004, p. 18). School leaders need to serve as protectors of the marginalized so the fault lines that exist in schools can be mitigated. While the existence of policies and procedures framed in social justice are designed to foster equity and justice, the measurable actions and beliefs of school leaders who are best poised to bring about the necessary change matters substantially (Rusch, 2004). Often, school programs, practices, and policies are not explicit in their intents regarding equity and justice (Furman & Gruenewald, 2004). School leaders who value and embrace diversity will also acknowledge the existing explicit and implicit power structures so that those outside the traditional power base can in fact be empowered to seek and attain the same high levels of achievement because they are expected to do so (Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Rusch, 2004).

To be proactive versus reactive, transformational leaders need to understand the genesis of bias and stereotypes in their schools so that creative ways can be explored to foster greater justice, fairness, and equity in schools (Brown, 2004; Marshall, 2004; Marshall & Oliva, 2010, Rusch, 2004; Shields, 2004; Theoharis, 2009). School leaders must have skills that will allow them the ability to embrace conflict as a means to effect change that will bring about greater equality in the areas of the total educational system including, but not limited to student programming, teacher quality, and overall student achievement (Brown, 2004; Kumashiro, 2009). This requires reflective practice as well as a commitment to a comprehensive mission and vision that all students have a fundamental right to feel safe and achieve at high levels that are appropriate for them (Brown, 2004; 2006; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Marshall, 2004; Marshall & Oliva, 2010).

Brown (2006) posits that transformational learning takes place when there has been change in assumptions, perceptions, and behaviors. Transformational leadership requires the

same level of change if justice and equity are to be facilitated in schools (Brown, 2006). These transformational leaders will be required to encourage changes in assumptions, perceptions, and behaviors not only within themselves, but also with their students, faculties, and communities (Brown, 2006). Through challenging oneself and all of the individuals associated with the school community, the transformational leader not only acknowledges the marginalized other, but seeks to clarify and shape the behaviors and actions of all individuals in the organization to effect greater social justice and equity for all students (Brown, 2006; Kumashiro, 2000; 2001; 2009). Until these critical transformations are made in our schools, they will continue to operate in the same oppressive ways that they always have (Brown, 2006).

The art of critically reflecting upon our actions so that the outcomes are more advantageous for all is an important component of social justice leadership (Brown, 2006). It requires leaders to truly embrace the fundamental principles of John Rawls so that the driving principles of the school culture are rooted in fairness and equity (Rawls, 1971). Rawls posited that once inequities were identified, they needed to be rectified so that each member of society would have access to an equally advantageous set of experiences (Rawls, 1971). Accomplishing this in schools requires that school leaders receive preparation in how to negotiate the knowledge, power, and change principles necessary to bring about equality for all students (Brown, 2006).

Moral leadership involves applying a set of standards that will drive the structure of teaching, learning, and leadership that apply to the success and inclusion of all students (Bates, 2006). These involve critical commitments that bring about conditions of democracy for all students, and an examination of the injustices that result from existing policies and expectations around high-stakes accountability measures (Bates, 2006).

Activism that focuses on fairness and equity is a critical component of social justice leadership (McKenzie et al., 2007). In their activism, leaders must define their work by raising academic achievement, preparing students for critical citizenship, and embracing inclusive practices (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Marshall, 2004; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; McKenzie et al., 2007; Theoharis, 2007; 2009). In raising academic achievement, leaders must use caution in identifying student achievement as the only measure of justice (Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Rusch, 2004, Skrla et al., 2004).

Public schools are forced to analyze and subsequently improve student achievement as it relates to both state and federal levels of accountability. Unfortunately, many schools often times mistake closing the achievement gap as achieving conditions of social justice while avoiding the more significant conversations around issues of social and educational injustice (Furman & Gruenewald, 2004). Therefore, many school leaders are failing to acknowledge the underlying inequities that exist within the school system by only looking at test data. Educators and school leaders invest enormous resources in studying student progress and then allocating resources to improve outcomes (Furman & Gruenewald, 2004). However, little time is spent examining the deeper assumptions related to cultural, gender, racial, ethnic, class, and sexual bias that may be contributing to student progress or the lack thereof.

McKenzie et al. (2004) posit that social justice leaders must make a commitment to preparing their students for a life as critical citizens in society and school leadership programs need to be able to prepare leaders to develop these skills in both themselves and their students. Students must be made aware of the social injustices as they relate to race, class, gender, socioeconomics, disability, and sexual orientation if they are going to be members of society who value fairness and equity (McKenzie et al., 2004; Rawls, 1971). Moreover, leaders for

social justice will engage students in conversations that involve issues related to marginalized groups with the purpose of encouraging problem solving, advocacy, and future leadership (McKenzie et al., 2004). By raising awareness around the issues of power, privilege, and inequality, students will have opportunities to engage with each other to identify inequities and to strive for their own visions of democracy, fairness, and equity in their schools.

In addition, leaders for social justice must develop skills in what teaching for social justice looks like (McKenzie et al., 2004; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Theoharis, 2007). Social justice leaders must know how to identify and employ both socially just teaching practices and pedagogies since not all good teaching is socially just pedagogy (McKenzie et al., 2004). Socially just teaching involves employing strategies that present benefits to all students as it acknowledges bias and seeks to mitigate those biases so that all students are provided the same level of access to high achievement (Anagnostopoulos et al. 2009; McKenzie et al., 2004; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Kose, 2009; Marshall, 2004; Marshall & Oliva, 2010, Shields, 2004; Theoharis, 2007; 2009).

Teachers need to incorporate social justice principles into their academic coursework if they are to effectively prepare students for a diverse world (Dessel, 2010; Kose, 2009; Kumashiro, 2001; 2009). The operational curriculum in our public schools is largely based in white, heterosexual, middle class male hegemony (Dessel, 2010; Kumashiro, 2001; 2009). The existence of this power structure will require school leaders to engage their teachers in professional development that seeks to build curriculum that heightens awareness around issues of marginalized groups of people so that students are taught a multidimensional curriculum that seeks to acknowledge and then eradicate inequality, discrimination, and injustice (Kose, 2009).

Summary of Chapter

There is compelling research that supports the need for focused attention to teaching, learning, and leadership that places a central focus on the principles of social justice. In his seminal work, John Rawls provides a compelling argument that government and the basic structures of the society in which we live be framed around the critical concepts of fairness, liberty, equality, and justice. Individual schools should be no exception. Within their respective Original Position and through a Veil of Ignorance, Rawls asks his reader to imagine a well-ordered society that is politically and socially stable. Within this context, we are forced to consider how best to mitigate inequity and protect societies' most vulnerable members from hardship for the betterment of all (Rawls, 1971; 2001).

Public schools are indeed microcosms of society. Students arrive at school each day from an infinite variety of backgrounds and abilities. If schools are to foster academic, social, and physical constructs that are accessible for all students, the same critical concepts of fairness, liberty, equality, and justice must be accounted for since the regulation of justice would require that the policymakers and practitioners structure themselves in ways that minimize any form(s) of inequality. Through acknowledging the inequalities that exist for students, schools who approach their work in this manner are better positioned to provide their students with access to a most advantageous learning environment that is keenly mindful of the relationship between the extent to which fair is equal and equal is fair.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This dissertation focused on gaining a greater understanding of the policies demonstrated and/or enacted by teachers and administrators at Lafayette High School that contributed to conditions of social justice for all students. The research methodology utilized for this dissertation was a single case study. "As a research method, case study is used in many situations, to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomenon" (Yin, 2009, p. 4). In addition, it provides the researcher and the consumer of the research the ability to develop a more in-depth understanding and description of a particular case (Creswell, 2007). According to Creswell (2007), a single case design can be utilized to focus on an issue or concern that exists within the field of research. This dissertation was designed to study the conditions that exist within the research site that may assist practitioners in the field of education to better understand the issues associated with fostering a school culture where positive conditions of social justice are employed. Through an in-depth analysis of these conditions, this dissertation provides educators with concrete examples of how these conditions may be replicated in other schools. Furthermore, this case study design utilized interviews, audio, documents, and reports to collect data (Creswell, 2007).

A qualitative research method was chosen as a research method to collect rich, dense data that enabled me to understand the individual and group understandings of both the experiences of students and teachers at Lafayette High School through the perceptions and experiences of the faculty and administration. While no students were interviewed, the collection of data allowed

me to extensively draw upon multiple sources of information to inform my findings. To that end, data were collected via individual interviews, focus group interviews, and through a review of public documents available through the website of the school. Through my interviews I was able to gain a greater understanding of how the faculty and administration at Lafayette High School understand the constructs associated with structuring conditions of social justice for their student body. The findings of the study confirm that the participants of this study shared many commonalities when it came to supporting the students at Lafayette High School. Moreover, the semi-structured interview protocols were designed to test consistency of purpose across stakeholders in their approach to supporting all students.

Research Site

Lafayette High School is situated in a suburban neighborhood and there well well-groomed private residences directly across the street. The school grounds were meticulously maintained with banners flying in front of the school representing the various academies that existed within the school and the school mascot. The crispness of the light colored brick and stonework of the school against the crimson red banners provided a stark contrast that visually and aesthetically drew me towards the building.

As I first entered Lafayette High School, I was struck by a palpable energy and sense of school spirit. Lafayette High School presented with a friendly culture, and I was greeted by school security at the main entrance, who was expecting me. He directed me to where I could find Michael, the school principal. I found him surrounded by students in the school store chatting with students and another member of the faculty in an affable way. I collected my data in the late fall, and there was general excitement around the recent success of the school's

football team, who was scheduled to be playing well and likely headed towards the state

playoffs. I observed packed hallways filled with seemingly engaged students who appeared

generally happy and pleased to be at school. Throughout the hallways, there were multiple

instances where I observed members of the staff engaged in conversations with students.

Moreover, during breaks in my interviews, I was permitted to explore the building. During my

casual explorations I observed students in the cafeteria sitting with one another across racial lines

and engaged with one another. There was a spirit of collegiality and cooperation among the

students at Lafayette High School that was refreshing to watch. As I further walked the hallways

of Lafayette High School, I noticed many faculty and staff members personally interacting with

students. There were occasions when these interactions were conversations on topics that I was

not privy to, but many occasions when a member of the staff was simply greeted a student by

name, asked how they were doing, or referred to something about the student that was uniquely

personal. Generally speaking, I had the distinct sense upon my explorations of the school that

faculty, staff members, and students liked coming to Lafayette High School.

School districts in the State of New Jersey are grouped within District Factor Groups

(DFGs). According to the State of New Jersey Department of Education's website, "The District

Factor Groups (DFGs) were first developed in 1975 for the purpose of comparing students'

performance on statewide assessments across demographically similar school districts. The

categories are updated every ten years when the Census Bureau releases the latest Decennial

Census data" (http://www.state.nj.us/education/). District Factor Groups are used to measure,

compare and analyze student test performance, student achievement, and relative socioeconomic

status of similar communities as defined by the New Jersey Department of Education

(http://www.state.nj.us/education).

Lafayette High School is a public high school in central New Jersey whose school district

has been assigned a District Factor Group classification of GH by the New Jersey Department of

Education. Of 549 school districts, 75 other school districts in the State of New Jersey have

received this classification (http://www.state.nj.us/education).

For the 2000-2001 and 2013-2104 school years, the New Jersey Department of Education reports

the following demographic data for students within the Lafayette School District:

Table 1: Demographic Data for Lafayette School District

Demographic Group	Number 2000	Percent 2000	Number 2014	Percent 2014
White	2741	70.5%	1867.5	46.6%
Black	558	14.4%	623	15.5%
Hispanic	214	5.5%	627	15.6%
Asian	372	9.6%	708.5	17.7%
Native American	1	.02%	3	.07%
Hawaiian Native	N/A	N/A	1	.03%
Two or More Races	N/A	N/A	181	4.5%
Total Enrollment	3886	100.02%	4011	100%
Free Lunch	286	7.4%	696	17.4%
Reduced Lunch	139	3.6%	240.5	6%
Limited English Proficiency	50	1.3%	136.5	3.4%

Source: New Jersey Department of Education, 2014

For the 2000-2001 and 2013-2104 school years, the New Jersey Department of Education reports the following demographic data for students at Lafayette High School:

Table 2: Demographic Data for Lafayette High School

Demographic Group	Number 2000	Percent 2000	Number 2014	Percent 2014
White	921	72%	561.5	48.3%
Black	169	13.2%	219	18.8%
Hispanic	64	5%	179	15.4%
Asian	125	9.8%	161.5	13.9%
Native American	0	0%	1	.09%
Hawaiian Native	N/A	N/A	0	0.0%
Two or More Races	N/A	N/A	41	3.5%
Total Enrollment	1279	100%	1163	99.9%
Free Lunch	N/A	N/A	696	17.4%
Reduced Lunch	N/A	N/A	240.5	6%
Limited English Proficiency	N/A	N/A	136.5	3.4%

Source: New Jersey Department of Education, 2014

The 1990, 2000, and 2010 Census of the United States reports the following data:

Table 3: Census Data of the United States of America

Demographic Group	Percent of Population 1990	Percent of Population 2000	Percent of Population 2010
White	80.3%	75.1%	72.4%
Black	12.1%	12.3%	12.6%
American Indian	.8%	.9%	.9%
Asian	2.8%	3.6%	4.8%
Native Hawaiian	.1%	.1%	.2%
2 or more Races	N/A	2.4%	2.9%
Other Race	3.9%	5.5%	6.2%
Total	100%	100%	100%
Hispanic or Latino Origin	9.0%	12.5%	16.3%

Source: United States Census, 2000; 2010

According to the United States Census, "Hispanic origins are not races because in the federal statistical system, Hispanic origin is considered to be a separate concept from race" (http://www.census.gov/). Thus, the United States Census reports the percentages of the Hispanic population separately. Lafayette High School's demography represents a student population with just over half being non-white. The demography of the school has seen dramatic changes in racial composition between the 2000-2001 and 2013-2014 school years. Data from

the New Jersey Department of Education indicates a 23.7% reduction in the number of white

students who attend Lafayette High School. The change in demographic has resulted in a 10.4%

increase in the Hispanic population, a 5.6% increase in the black population, and a 4.1% increase

in the Asian population. Furthermore, the 2010 Census of the United States included a category

for Two or More Races. 3.5% of the students at Lafayette High School were reported to identify

in as multi-racial. It is important to note that while the demographic composition of the student

body may have changed within both Lafayette High School and the Lafayette School District,

the participants in this dissertation did not attribute race as a contributing factor to student need,

nor was it the focus of their work. While the community had become more diverse, the

participants in this dissertation reported that the Lafayette community had historically been a

predominantly white working class community with a diverse population. They further reported

that race relations between and among the various demographic groups had been strong for many

years. Rather, the participants in this dissertation attributed the socioeconomic status of the

student body as the most critical barrier to student success. The township is situated between

wealthy and poor municipalities as well as neighboring towns whose demographics are far less

racially and economically diverse. These contexts provide a unique context for the

administration, faculty and staff at Lafayette High School that made it a particularly interesting

research site. The participants in this dissertation noted that they felt that the school district was

well resourced, and that the budget was developed by the Board of Education and administration

to support strong student programming. According to data available by the New Jersey

Department of Education, voters in the Lafayette School District had affirmatively passed 10 of

their past 12 school budgets.

Sample Selection

A purposeful sampling strategy was utilized for this study. Purposeful sampling is an effective sampling method as it allows the researcher to, "select individuals and sites because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). The research site and participants were selected for this study through both convenience and reputational sampling. Both are efficient, inexpensive ways to identify research participants that has the potential to impact the integrity of the data collected (Cresswell, 2007). Through discussions with my colleagues and through my own Internet research I came to understand that Lafayette High School enjoyed a positive reputation for employing the principles of social justice. It is a district characterized by high achievement and possesses comprehensive policies pertaining to harassment, bullying and student protections. Through an introduction to the principal of the school, I was provided with an opportunity to conduct my research as the principal, Superintendent of Schools, and Board of Education were reportedly interested in the findings of my research.

Participants were solicited through a general communication introducing my research study via the school principal. To qualify for the study, participants of any gender, or subject area were considered randomly. Inclusionary or exclusionary criterion associated with the selection of adult research participants was not utilized, and participants of any race, gender, ethnicity, etc. were welcome to participate in this study.

The first five teachers and four administrators who volunteered were selected to participate (n=9). All participants were ultimately selected in consultation with the building principal since they all possessed historically positive interactions with students and their

knowledge of the school building. To minimize any concerns of undue coercive power or bias on the part of the principal, efforts were made to identify participants who were tenured. However, non-tenured administrators and/or teachers were not precluded from participation. All five teachers were tenured and one of four administrators was tenured. All participants were provided with an opportunity to read both Informed Consents prior to their respective interviews and were provided with opportunities to ask questions or withdraw from the study at any point during the data collection process. Prior to being interviewed, all participants signed separate Informed Consent forms for both their individual and focus group interviews.

Data Collection

This dissertation utilized three data collection methods: individual semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and document collection. The purpose of this dissertation was to understand whether or not socially just conditions of fairness, equality, democracy, and safety was perceived to be enjoyed by all students and implemented by the school leader. All individual interviews were audio-taped and then transcribed for analysis. Participants were reminded at the beginning of each session about the importance of confidentiality. They were told that they could stop the recorder at any time and that they could also decide to pass on or skip any of the questions.

To increase the credibility of any qualitative research study, standards for validation are critical (Creswell, 2007). Further, to enhance the substantive validation of the study, I sought to better understand my own interpretations through the data collection process. To address any questions of validity and minimize any subjectivity introduced by me, I employed the use of member checks. These member checks took place during the course of my initial interviews

through the use of summarizing and paraphrasing at pre-determined points so that the responses

of the participants would be recorded more accurately. I also utilized formal member checks with

my participants. In addition, I was able to triangulate data through the analysis and coding

process to minimize threats to validity from interviews, checklists, observations, and document

reviews (Creswell, 2007, Marshall & Rossman, 2006, Yin, 2009). Triangulation is an effective

strategy to test multiple perspectives about the social world and how they are understood in

multiple contexts to ensure that findings are strong and grounded across participants (Marshall &

Rossman, 2006).

Interviews

Data collection occurred through the use of semi-structured interviews with 4

administrators and 5 teachers at this high school (n=9), and two focus group interviews of 4

administrators (n=4) and 5 teachers within this high school (n=5). All participants took part in

both interviews. The data for this study were collected over multiple days using a digital voice

recorder and was transcribed for coding and analysis. Furthermore, study participants were asked

to take a brief demographic survey. Each semi-structured interview and focus group interview of

participants took place over the course of approximately 60 minutes. Each participant was asked

to engage in one individual interview and one focus group interview.

According to the New Jersey Department of Education, there were 116.5 professional

staff members at Lafayette High School comprised of 4 administrators, 17 special services

professionals, and 95.5 teachers. Using a comparative approach, a researcher collects data until a

saturation effect is achieved. In these cases, further insights are not obtained by the collection of

additional data (Creswell, 2007). While the number of participants in this study was small,

representing a small percentage of the teaching staff, a saturation effect was achieved through the

data collected during the semi-structured interviews, thus negating the need to identify additional

research participants.

Review of Documents

To collect a rich data set, I engaged in an extensive document review. The document

review began by examining the New Jersey laws that protect marginalized students. This led to a

review of existing case law to better understand the historical, social, and/or political context of

the existing laws. I then completed a document review of the Board of Education policies

pertaining to the protections that exist for marginalized students at the district level. It became

important for me to learn whether these policies exist because a state or federal law mandated it,

if they were in response to a unique and/or local circumstance and/or event, or if they existed as

part of a greater commitment to best practice. I studied all publicly available documents that

referenced budget, issues of access to opportunity as well as explicit protections for marginalized

students. As such, I collected and analyzed Board of Education policies related to Mission,

Vision, and Value Statements, Parental Involvement, and Equal Opportunity. In addition, I

reviewed the Mission Statement of the Lafayette Public Schools and the extent to which the

participants in this study knew of it and the extent to which they were implementing it whether it

was intentional or not.

Role of Researcher

My positionality within this dissertation study places me as an outside researcher. I serve

as the Superintendent of Schools in a high performing school district in Westchester County,

New York. My responsibilities within the school district include general and specific oversight

of all of the operations of the school district. I did not have any personal relationships with any

administrators, teachers, students, or Board of Education members within the Lafayette School

District.

A bias that I have going into this study is that as a member or a historically marginalized

group, I have been the subject of being marginalized as a student within public schools and as a

public school educator. While it is no longer the case, over the course of many years, I have felt

compelled to conceal one of my most basic identities to avoid being the subject of potentially

hostile situations. For this reason, I have chosen to include the study of LGBTQ students in my

study. However, I am equally interested in the experiences of all types of students, particularly

marginalized students. I do not choose to conceal my sexual orientation in either the workplace

or in my private life, and answer questions honestly when they arise. However, it is important to

acknowledge that my own personal and professional experiences have shaped my personal

interests in conducting a study of this nature. My background as a school district administrator,

English teacher and special education teacher have provided me with direct experiences that

have led me to suspect that not all students are fully integrated into school and in fact, they may

be reasonably isolated from accessing the full and completed programs within the school itself.

Data Analysis

A holistic analysis of how teachers and administrators at Lafayette High School enact

policies aimed at social justice was employed. Because the global nature of the concept of social

justice was studied in this research, a holistic design is best utilized (Creswell, 2007). Data

analysis included the extensive analysis of interview data through the review of audiotapes and

transcripts. Data analysis began with an inductive coding method was utilized in combination

with a priori codes that were generated during the course of my pilot study where I attempted to

answer this same research question. However, the pilot study focused solely on the experiences

of English Language Learners. Some of the more prevalent codes that emerged from that data

were themes around isolation of marginalized students, the role of the building principal,

conflict, "othering," oppressive niceness, and access to programs. While these codes were useful

in the beginning, the inductive process was more fruitful to understand the context of the

research questions at Lafayette High School. All data was hand coded and then grouped into

broader categories/domains to inform the findings of this research.

I began the hand-coding process by reading through transcript data and my field notes. I

decided to hand-code the data so that I would have a deep understanding of my collected data.

Efforts to code through purchased software were not fruitful as I felt disconnected from the

process, thus hindering my ability to maximize the understandings of my data. The first pass of

codes was accomplished through the use of a priori codes. Using multiple highlighters, the data

began to make more sense through an inductive process, as new, more vibrant rough codes that

were directly linked to the extant literature and the work of Rawls emerged. In order to maximize

fidelity to the collected data, the codes, *shared values and school culture, serendipity versus

strategy, community/local context, equity and fairness, and transformational leadership* were the

codes that most accurately represented the stories of my research participants as well as the

important local contexts that existed at Lafayette High School.

Using the theories espoused by John Rawls, I sought to ascertain whether or not there

was evidence that equal access to equality and justice existed within this public school (Rawls,

1971). Furthermore, the critical concept that fairness is not always equal and that equality is not

always fair was evaluated as a prevailing practice within this public school. My research journal,

field notes, and analytic memos served as important data points to triangulate and analyze the data that I collected and analyzed.

Through individual interviews teachers and administrators had the opportunity to share their perceptions of historically marginalized students at Lafayette High School. In addition, the research participants were provided with the opportunity to identify specific strategies, policies, and/or practices that either led to or detracted from the promotion of social justice for students at their school. Moreover, they were provided with opportunities to identify the qualities that school personnel in their school possess that lead to the promotion of socially just conditions at their school.

Limitations

Several limitations can be attributed to this dissertation. Since I have not found another study similar to this one, this would be considered an initial study, and thus potentially difficult to transfer any of its findings. The findings within this dissertation may be used in a similar study with a similar research question to potentially confirm or apply the findings within this dissertation (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In addition, the relative low number of participants associated with this study may lead to issues around the emergence of regular codes and patterns within the data. Finally, while using a single case study allowed me to gain an extremely deep understanding of my research question within the research site, it precludes the reader from making any assumptions regarding the findings.

While this dissertation should be considered an initial study, it is potentially a significant study as it seeks to begin to synthesize the critical components identified in the literature as they relate to social justice in schools. The concepts of leadership, policy, and curriculum are

explored through the lens of John Rawls to elucidate the impact of the policies within this one public high school. This dissertation's power lies in the potential is has to begin the development of a more complete profile of a public high school that employs the principles of fairness and equality for all of the students who attend this particular school. An additional limitation to this dissertation lies within the fact that students were not interviewed, and thus all findings are self-reported by adults. While the findings within this dissertation suggest that the experiences for students are largely positive, there is risk that the participants may be biased towards communicating a more positive outcome than would be otherwise be expected.

Summary of Chapter

The benefits associated with this research project include identifying the policies, practices, and strategies that exist within this research site that contribute to conditions of social justice for all learners. This project adds an important perspective to the existing social justice literature. In addition, consumers of these research findings can use this data to inform practice in other schools aimed towards implementing policies, practices, and strategies that make schools caring, equal, fair, respectful, and democratic spaces where all children can thrive.

The overwhelming majority of data from this study were derived from both the individual interviews and focus group interviews. The participants in this study were without exception committed to the success of the students of Lafayette High School. Through my conversations with them I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the role that local context plays in enacting policies of social justice. The participants in this study were fiercely supportive of their school administration and consistently attributed their ability to enact these policies for their students to support they receive from their building and central administration. The document review was helpful in laying a backdrop for a more formal, local context. However, the semi-

structured interviews and focus group interview provided profound evidence that Lafayette High School is doing right by its student body. Teachers, administrators, and support staff either report or describe being unified in their dedication to supporting all students in Lafayette through a variety of formal and informal practices that are more fully described in the next chapter of this work.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This dissertation sought to identify how teachers and administrators at Lafayette High School enact policies grounded in social justice. For the purpose of this study the use of the term policy was broadly defined as the rules adopted by the Board of Education as well as the standing practices within the District and/or school, and the enactment of both typical and idiosyncratic practices and/or behaviors by teachers and administrators at Lafayette High School. The student bodies of Lafayette School District and Lafayette High School are diverse. Students who attend Lafayette are described to come from a multitude of socioeconomic backgrounds and the nine participants in this study spoke positively about the diverse composition of the student body. Throughout the course of this study, the participants of this study spoke with purpose and precision about the policies and practices that they employed at Lafayette to make the experiences of the students who attend their school meaningful and accessible.

These data generated from this study indicated that Lafayette High School was a school that is led by a purposeful administration and dedicated teachers. The findings of this dissertation are supported by five major codes/themes that became critical to the analysis of the dense data collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and document analysis. Each participant within this study talked with me about the importance of the existence of *shared values and school culture* at Lafayette High School that promote conditions of social justice for their students. The participants of this study talked with me about the interplay of the formal versus the informal in how the policies and standing practices at Lafayette High School led to

conditions of social justice for students. This code, which I have termed, *serendipity versus strategy* was a fascinating phenomenon to explore. It suggests how the participants felt safe to build upon the good conditions that promote the existence of *equity and fairness* at Lafayette High School, while acknowledging the frustrations associated with the existence of standing practices that are not codified for the entire system. *Community/local context* was noted to be an important theme for the participants in this study.

The town of Lafayette is uniquely situated between the municipalities of Thomasville and Petersville, each with respectively radically different socioeconomic compositions. Free and Reduced lunch data derived from the New Jersey Department of Education sheds light on the geographic and socioeconomic positionality of Lafayette High School. Socioeconomic factors play a significant role in the way that teachers and administrators at Lafayette High School approach their work in the area of social justice.

Table 4: Comparative Free and Reduced Lunch Data (Thomasville/Lafayette/Petersville)

District	Total Enrollment	Number Free Lunch	Percent Free Lunch	Number Reduced Lunch	Percent Reduced Lunch	Number Combined Free and Reduced Lunch	Number Combined Free and Reduced Lunch
Thomasville	10,368.5	8,702.0	83.9%	579.0	5.6%	9,281.0	89.5%
Lafayette	4011.0	696.0	17.4%	240.5	6%	936.5	23.3%
Petersville	3406.5	338.0	9.9%	78.5	2.3%	416.5	12.2%

Source: New Jersey Department of Education, 2014

The participants in this dissertation all spoke directly to the concepts of *equity and fairness.* The awareness of both the existence and interplay of these two important concepts

emerged as a central finding within this dissertation. Akin to the work of Rawls, (1971), the faculty and administration who I interviewed grappled with their ability to find ways to mitigate for inequities so that they would be better positioned to offer opportunities for students that are fair and just. All of my participants noted in one way or another that their ability to foster a culture of fairness required them to explore the extent to which equity plays a contributing role. Thus, these discussions and this finding led me to confirm that at Lafayette High School fair did not always mean that all things are equal and the pursuit of equality for all did not necessitate that all things will always be fairly distributed or allocated.

The final major finding of this dissertation is focused on the importance of *transformational leadership*. Lafayette High School is led by four administrators, all of whom were within their first three years of their tenure at Lafayette High School. In my interviews with teachers, each participant within this dissertation noted that they were impressed and appreciative of the leadership provided by the administration. They felt supported to be able to respond creatively to meet the needs of their students. Furthermore, each participant spoke extensively about the instructional and social imperatives established by their administration as well as the established expectations to support the academic and social success of the students at Lafayette High School. This administration was described to be notably different from the previous administration(s) and there was a palpable sense that the changes being made were good for all students, good for all faculty/staff, and good for the organization. All four administrators spoke extensively about the goals that they have for Lafayette High School and the decision-making process associated with ensuring that conditions of fairness, equity and justice were meted across all contexts of Lafayette High School.

Table 5: Demographic Data of Participants

Name	Gender	Primary Role	Age	Ethnicity	Years at Lafayette
Ava	F	Teacher	56-60	White	30
Emily	F	Teacher	60-65	White	30
Emma	F	Teacher/Academy Leader	40-45	White	16
Isabella	F	Teacher	50-55	White	12
Jacob	M	Assistant Principal	30-35	Black	3
Madison	F	Assistant Principal	30-35	White	2
Michael	M	Principal	40-45	White	3
Olivia	F	Teacher/Academy Leader	40-45	White	6
Sophia	F	Assistant Principal	30-35	White	2

Background Information of Participants

Emma

Emma was a female English and Humanities teacher and Academy Leader at Lafayette

High School. Emma was a Caucasian female between the ages of 40-45 years old. She had been

teaching at Lafayette High School for 16 years. Emma was a serious and focused individual who

was eager to promote success among the students at Lafayette High School. The strength of her

personality and belief system drove her work in the area of social justice both in the classroom as well as in her leadership role as a grade level academy leader.

Isabella

Isabella was a female English and Humanities teacher at Lafayette High School. Isabella was a Caucasian female between the ages of 50-55 years old. She had been teaching at Lafayette High School for 12 years and an additional year at the middle school. Prior to her work at Lafayette, Isabella was at home with her children for a period of time, and also worked in another division of public government managing logistics. Isabella presented with a kind demeanor who has an understanding of the various subgroups that exist at Lafayette High School and tied student challenge primarily to socioeconomics. Her teaching assignments provided her with an interesting perspective on the ways in which gender and sexual orientation shape the experiences of her students.

Emily

Emily was a female social studies teacher at Lafayette High School. Emily was a Caucasian female between the ages of 60-65 years old. She has been teaching at Lafayette High School for 30 years. She presented herself as an enthusiastic teacher, who brought a sense of longevity and history to this dissertation. Emily's story and perspective about Lafayette High School is one that is reflective of her longevity and the various activities that she participated in as a member of the faculty at Lafayette High School.

Olivia

Olivia was an English and Humanities teacher and Academy leader at Lafayette High School. Olivia was a Caucasian female between the ages of 40-45 years old. She had been teaching at Lafayette High School for 6 years. Olivia seemed to be a positive, hopeful, pragmatist. She was a career changer who found her way to public education from Wall Street. Her story of her experiences and work aimed at the promotion of social justice at Lafayette was compelling.

Ava

Ava was an English and Humanities teacher at Lafayette High School. Ava was a Caucasian female between the ages of 56-60 years old. She had been teaching at Lafayette for 30 years. Though Ava presented with a quiet demeanor, her loyalty to Lafayette High School as well as her unwavering commitment to her students were clear, targeted, and purposeful in her approach.

Michael

Principal Michael was brought to Lafayette High School as an internal candidate from one of the lower schools. Michael was a Caucasian male between the ages of 40-45 years old. He had been serving as the principal of Lafayette High School for three years and had served as an administrator in the District for nine years. Michael presented as a principled and focused leader who expressed enormous pride for his district, school, his students, and his faculty.

Madison

Madison was an administrator at Lafayette High School. Madison was a Caucasian female between the ages of 30 and 35 years old. She was bilingual and had been serving in her role for 2 years. She presented herself as focused and calm with respect emerging as a prominent theme for her and her leadership at Lafayette High School.

Jacob

Jacob was an administrator at Lafayette High School. Jacob was an African-American male between the ages of 30 and 35 years old. He had been serving in his role for 3 years. Jacob presented as a kind, affable, and dedicated administrator who placed an important emphasis on his work of promoting conditions of social justice for the students at Lafayette High School.

Sophia

Sophia was an administrator at Lafayette High School. She was a Caucasian female between the ages of 30 and 35 years old and had been serving in her role for 2 years. She was an early career administrator with values that supported the direct instruction in core character education. She placed a high value on the role that respect and ethical decision making played in the development of high levels of morale for students, adults, and parents.

Shared Values and School Culture

Schools have unique and distinctive cultures that are generally well-known and understood by the people who work there. The culture of a school represents the collective values, norms, and beliefs that collectively drive the school (Dupper & Meyer-Adams, 2002). A positive school culture and climate will facilitate conditions where students can thrive, and staff

members can feel safe, supported, and are provided with the latitude to enact policies,

procedures, and practices that promote conditions where justice and fairness are sustainable

(Buckel, 2000; Conoley, 2008; Dupper & Meyer-Adams, 2002; Kozik-Rosabal, 2000; Lugg,

1998; 2008; Macgillivray, 2000; Mayo, 2007; Payne, 2007 Russo, 2006).

At Lafayette High School a social contract existed that promoted conditions of social

justice for students. Rawls asserts that the existence of this well understood social contract would

lead to conditions of fairness, equity, and morality (Chambers, 2012; Rawls, 1971; 2001).

Lafayette High School had teachers and administrators who were interested in fairness and

justice for their students. Consequently, they consistently sought to expand opportunities as well

as promote equitable experiences for their students. The participants in this dissertation trusted

their principal, Michael. His collaborative, empowering leadership style fostered a culture of

trust at Lafayette High school that led to high levels of trust, collaboration, and commitment.

When teachers are provided with the autonomy to make decisions that will benefit students,

engagement of students and staff are likely to be elevated (Price, 2011; Varjas et al., 2007).

Lafayette High School possessed shared values that were well understood by the

organization. Rawls argues for the need for society to be well-ordered and regulated by a shared

public understanding of justice (Rawls, 1971; 2001). The teachers and administrators at

Lafayette High School who participated in this dissertation demonstrated a conceptual

understanding of how to honor and confirm a publicly accepted and recognized social

cooperation that challenges oppression, promotes democracy, and facilitates favorable social

conditions that lead to the enactment of polices aimed at social justice.

Emma valued the diversity at Lafayette High School. It was important for her to let me know Lafayette High School had students from all kinds of backgrounds and that she liked it because it reflected the world. She presented a pragmatic and proud approach to her eagerness to promote success for all students. She indicated that much work had been done among the faculty but more work remained as they strive to reach all students in meaningful ways. Emma reported that there it was common for teachers and administrators to be engaged in discussion and planning to address the needs of students at Lafayette High School. As a result, she believed that this hard work and focused attention would lead to equitable outcomes for the students at Lafayette High School.

Researchers posit that it is critical for personnel in schools to be able to identify instances where students may become marginalized and structures imbued with hegemony can and should be mitigated (Buckel, 2000; Conoley, 2008; Kozik-Rosabal, 2000; Kumashiro, 2000; 2001; Macgillivray, 2000; Russo, 2006; Varjas et al., 2007). Emma reported that the policymakers and practitioners at Lafayette High School were aware and paying attention to those students who lacked equitable access to programming and supports. Those students were primarily described to be of low socioeconomic status and teachers and administrators knew that they must do what they can to "level the playing field so that we can ensure that everyone has access to whatever it is that they need to succeed." The staff at Lafayette had worked to establish a culture where it was expected that obstacles to student achievement be identified and then subsequently ameliorated.

Emma believed that students were treated fairly at Lafayette and that a general tone of acceptance of all students existed for students. Emma stated that, "anything that might be seen as

an obstacle in a child's way to success is something that needs to be addressed." She noted that the teaching staff and the building administration were largely focused on the same outcomes for students and that there was an awareness of students who may be marginalized and a shared sense that the faculty is open, accepting, and supportive of student differences and ensuring that all students were treated fairly and equitably.

Emma noted that members of the faculty and administration had been focused on building a culture of respect at Lafayette High School. This included actively confronting issues related to bullying and/or discrimination. She indicated that much work had been done at Lafayette High School to promote a positive school culture rooted in the principles of social justice. Some of this work had been prompted by state level legislation, like the Harassment, Bullying and Intimidation Act, which forced the District and school to implement reporting mechanisms and formal processes to deal with student issues specifically related to bullying. Emma indicated that the faculty and administration were initially overwhelmed by the requirements of the legislation. She reported that teachers were formally trained in what to do and there was a great deal of discussion and anxiety among faculty during the initial implementation. She described the culture at Lafayette as one that assimilates these kinds of initiatives into the culture of the school with facility.

Similarly, Isabella noted that she appreciated the diversity at Lafayette High School and valued the opportunities that it provided her as a teacher to work with students in meaningful ways. While she largely defined diversity in terms of socioeconomics, her point of view was expanded to specifically include race, religion, primary language, and sexual orientation.

Teaching from a socially just position is a powerful way to acknowledge the existence of inequities and an effective manner in which to mitigate and ameliorate conditions of oppression (Dessel, 2010; Kumashiro, 2000; Mansfield, 2013; Mthethwa-Sommers, 2013; Philpott & Dagenais, 2012). Isabella mentioned that coursework in gender studies, multiethnic literature, and sexuality had been built to attract diverse students to engaging coursework. Isabella recognized the need to reach a wide range of students and acknowledged that electives were built specifically to appeal to some of the subgroups at Lafayette High School. Isabella was proud of her multiethnic literature class because it attracted a diverse group of minority students to her course. She stated that the school had been deliberate about trying to reach the points of view of many students. For example, she stated that students are likely attracted to multiethnic literature because they feel like, "maybe I won't be reading the dead white guys. Maybe I'll be reading books by people who look like me." Her gender studies class was designed with both females and LGBTQ students in mind and explores societies' perception of gender, how it impacts society, the individual perception of self, and the effects of the masculine archetype. Both courses explore issues of oppression and how to challenge ideas of oppression through literature.

When asked about the things she most enjoyed about her work at Lafayette High School, Emily noted that the size of the school was a strong asset because it afforded students depth of programming. She also described that she enjoyed and appreciated the diversity of the student body and community. Once again, diversity to Emily, was largely framed around socioeconomics and geography.

Emily talked about an overt and concerted effort to engage more minority students and lower income students in advanced placement and/or honors courses at Lafayette High School.

She was clear that the focus was on ensuring that academic talent is fostered for all students and that any potential barriers be removed.

Olivia noted that the focus to raise student achievement at Lafayette High School was an "understood concept" and that there was a clear and focused effort to move this work along at Lafayette High School. Rawls posits that collectively understood value structures are powerful indicators in facilitating conditions of fairness and equity (Rawls, 1971; 2001). There was an imperative around this work according to Olivia and she described most teachers as actively engaged in the process. Excuses and/or scapegoating of students was not accepted at Lafayette, and Olivia reported that she rarely if ever heard her colleagues engaged in these types of conversations. Her strategy for addressing these types of conversations when they came up was to confront them in a measured, rational way for the purpose of putting the conversation to an end.

Ava appreciated how close knit the community of Lafayette was. She stated that Lafayette High School functioned like a family and she attributed that largely to a new administration. Ava noted that the current principal, Michael had done substantial work in setting a positive culture after several years of what she described as an oppressive administration that she felt devalued teachers and their work. She mentioned that the school culture was one in which teachers and administrators cared about one another and largely worked towards attaining positive outcomes for students in many ways. According to Ava, there was not room for bias of any kind at Lafayette, and that there was a shared value that intolerance including but not limited to racism, homophobia, gender bias, xenophobia, would be handled aggressively by the administration. The exposure of these conditions allowed the educators at Lafayette High School

opportunities to confront, analyze, and act upon opportunities to isolate and end the existence of oppression (Ritchie, 2012). Further, the staff and administration at Lafayette High School had committed to using discipline to further instruction. Thus, all disciplinary infractions were addressed through the lens of positive character development.

Ava also noted that she appreciated and valued the diversity of the student body as well as student programming at Lafayette High School. She described how respect, kindness, and flexibility were all core components of the school culture at Lafayette High School. That said, Ava was highly critical of new accountability systems surrounding teacher observations and supervision. She acknowledged that they were primarily driven by external forces at the state level, and felt strongly that it was serving as a distraction to her work and the work of the school administration. While this could have served as a major threat to justice at Lafayette High School, it did not seem to be having that effect.

The principal of a school is able to directly shape the conditions of his/her school is palpable ways (Price, 2011). Michael stated that he expected students to be treated well at Lafayette, and believed that the overwhelming majority of his faculty and staff were supportive of his efforts. He recognized the effort of his guidance counselors in identifying students who had the potential to be successful in advanced level coursework and the levels of personalization that go into their work. He then stated that it was his expectation that it was the job of each teacher to, "take them all, not just the potential new kids…but take them all and own them so that they grow, hold them accountable to high standards, and be invested in them and their success as students and as people." He cited that his teachers were largely supportive of this sentiment and were more than willing to engage in this type of work.

Madison enjoyed feeling like she was part of a strong team at Lafayette High School. She felt supported by her administrative colleagues, her principal and her central office administration. Madison cited the ethnic and socioeconomic diversity as strengths of Lafayette High School. She mentioned that the school culture supported an appreciation for diversity and an expectation that adults will form strong relationships with students. Assistant Principals in Lafayette were highly involved in student discipline and each followed a cohort of students over time so that they could build bonds and relationships with students and families.

Jacob mentioned that the values of respect, inclusion, and equity were important themes at Lafayette High School. He explained that the school had been working towards raised expectations for all students and that he was proud to be a part of the Lafayette community. He described teachers at Lafayette as supportive and actively supportive of their students.

Sophia indicated that, "teachers here really care about kids and work to make connections with them." She described the existence of a shared sense that everyone wants to see students succeed and that many teachers were specifically teaching towards topics associated with strong character development. That said, she mentioned that she believed that, in her opinion, it was very dependent on the individual teacher in spite of the notion that she suspected that teachers knew that this was a priority for the district.

Serendipity versus Strategy

The findings of this dissertation indicated that there were well-known, articulated programs that existed at Lafayette High School that were designed to support students with academic, social, behavior, and/or substance abuse issues. That said, the data collected also supports the existence of a vast network of informal policies and idiosyncratic practices that were

enacted by the policymakers and practitioners. The interplay of these two contexts were coded as *serendipity versus strategy* since both led to positive outcomes for the students at Lafayette High School.

The intersection of personal beliefs with the existing political structures are strong indicators of how local policies are enacted if every member of a school community is to become a strong advocate for conditions aimed at social justice (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Opfer, 2006; Sanelli & Perreault, 2001, Theoharis, 2009; Williamson, Rhodes, & Dunson, 2007). The teachers and administrators at Lafayette High School who participated in this dissertation functioned as strong advocates to enact policies that promoted socially just conditions for their students. There was an expectation at Lafayette High School that teachers and administrators would facilitate the existence of an environment that mitigated hegemonic ideologies and power structures so that student engagement would be elevated.

Where the administrators considered the existence of serendipity an expected behavior that would benefit students, the teachers who participated in this dissertation expressed frustration by the lack of formality that existed among some of the policies and procedures that existed at Lafayette High School. They expressed a strong desire to make the less formal more formalized so that positive outcomes for students would become more strategic and less teacher-dependent. There is extensive research to support the critical need to formalize policies and practices that promote conditions aimed towards social justice (Buckel, 2000; Conoley, 2008; Dupper & Meyer-Adams, 2002; Kozik-Rosabal, 2000; Lugg, 1998; 2008; Macgillivray, 2000; Mayo, 2007; Payne, 2007; Russo, 2006; Varjas, et al., 2007). In contrast, the existence of innate belief systems that measure growth as fluid rather than static and mindsets that focus on the

disposition of growth as a facilitator to learning and student development are also strong

contributors that will create sustainable conditions of social justice (Diez, 2007; Dweck, 2006;

Mansfield, 2013; Mthethwa-Sommers, 2013; Ritchie, 2012).

The teachers and administrators at Lafayette High School who participated in this

dissertation demonstrated their ability to enact Rawls' two moral powers (Rawls, 1971; 2001).

They demonstrated a working knowledge of their individual and collective understandings and

ability to act from a position of equity and fairness that facilitates social cooperation. In addition,

through their actions, they were able to behave in ways that allowed the ability to pursue

conditions that were just and fair for themselves and the good of their school (Rawls, 2001).

As stated earlier, the balance between the implementation of formal programs and

practices established within the District and at Lafayette High School with the individual actions

of teachers and/or groups of teachers created a local phenomenon at Lafayette High School.

While there were a multitude of established formal programs and standing practices at Lafayette

High School, many individual teachers and small groups of teachers worked together to better

meet the needs of their students.

Emma mentioned that her department tends to be very close-knit, that they knew one

another for extended periods of time, enjoy positive relationships, and spent time talking about

the experiences of their students both inside and outside the classroom. Informal discussions

were the primary form of communication and generally involved matters related to classroom

practice, lesson planning, and the experiences of individual students. When the standing

practices or policies were formalized it was important to Emma that they be well-articulated,

sustainable, and supervised. She was clear that teacher input was critical to the success of any program, policy, or standing practice.

Lafayette High School offered a comprehensive set of support systems for its students. There were specialized classes for students who were academically at risk to help prepare them for upcoming tests that are high-stakes and needed as graduation requirements. In addition, there is an alternative program for students with behavioral difficulties and another program to assist students with substance abuse issues. A Student Assistance counselor was also available. Emma was well-versed in how to make things happen for students. She talked about how to maneuver the system so that students were able to get what she considered needed services quickly. Emma knew the members of each team responsible for screening students for entry into the various programs that exist to support any number of student issues including, but not limited to academic, social/emotional/ and or substance abuse. She also expressed confidence that once student issues were identified, there were many formal mechanisms in place to assist students. Emma suggested that the process for identification and referral processes needed to be more systemic and strategic in nature and less reliant on individual teacher knowledge and/or advocacy.

The administration of Lafayette High School had identified reducing the number of students with failing grades among the free and reduced lunch population as a priority. Emma agreed that this was a demographic group at Lafayette that struggled academically, and that it was a laudable goal. To that end, Emma noted that she and her colleagues were formed in collegial groups known as Professional Learning Communities to study student data and then make adjustments to their instructional practices. Emma confirmed that this practice has helped

her and her team to clarify and focus their goals. She stated, "you can't really just go around saying, okay, so you have free and reduced lunch? Okay. So then we need to help you pass. You go sit over here. That doesn't work. But, you know, it's still the same kids that were trying to help, those are the kids that are in our classrooms, who are consistently not doing very well. So we're trying to come up with strategies together." According to Emma, the strategic focus of the work had yielded positive results for her students.

As the Sophomore Academy Leader, Emma was uniquely positioned to help students. Her team implemented several strategic ways to support students that were all grassroots efforts. For example, the sophomore team instituted a series of character awards that were given out to students around the themes of respect, kindness, spirit, academic success/improvement, and leadership. While this program started with sophomores, it expanded to the freshman class as well. Students received recognition at the school level, but also at the District level by the Board of Education. Additionally, Emma indicated that the sophomore team also used a shared document that was available to all teachers to track students who are at risk.

At the school level, Emma discussed the use of school-wide recognition for students who demonstrated good character. Within her classroom, Emma described the ways that she individualized support for her students. She noted the importance of the need to make individual connections with her students so that they knew that she "had their back" and was willing to "go to bat" for them. Emma explained the extent to which empathy and compassion played a role in her ability to support her students. She noted the importance of knowing when to give students a break, when she needed to push students and when it was necessary for her to pull her students

along. She credited the Superintendent of Schools for being a strong advocate for students and

for clarifying the metaphor for her and her colleagues.

Isabella confirmed the existence of specialized programs to support students with

academic, social, or substance abuse issues. She noted that for the students whom she teaches,

once they were referred, their needs were largely addressed and thus, their grades improved.

Isabella described how she had confidence in the guidance counselors to be able to identify the

needs of students. She described a new alternative school designed to meet the needs of students

who had unique learning needs that prevented them from being successful in a traditional high

school program.

While there was a general sense of the existing programming, Isabella was less clear on

what the formal processes were to put specific supports in place. She acknowledged that a degree

of efficacy was dependent on the staff, but that her sense was that most staff members were

paying attention to this because of the expectations that existed within the building. Isabella

described her belief that a great deal of academic support existed at Lafayette High School. She

noted that over the course of time, specific demographic subgroups had been identified and

targeted supports had been provided.

Lafayette High School had attempted to distill a large high school into smaller

communities to increase student engagement. Programs such as Peer Leadership, grade level

academies, and targeted programming addressed specific student needs. As such, Isabella's

perception was that community building and student engagement were important components to

the success of Lafayette High School. Further, she thought that the work was worthwhile and

Isabella took pride in the sense of community that existed in Lafayette. Isabella mentioned

specific incidences when the school was involved in supporting a family in need for reasons including, but not limited to, house fires, medical needs, and general economic needs. She stated that, Lafayette has a strong sense of community and we try and take care of each other."

Emily stated that, "sometimes I know things serendipitously, but we need to make a concerted effort to have a network of threads to weave our programs together." This clarion call became a clear area of need across all of the participants in this dissertation. The bridge between the formal and informal is an area of concern for those that I interviewed at Lafayette. The systematic implementation of programming so that everyone is aware of their accessibility was an area of concern for Emily. She was confident that many teachers were doing many positive things to support many students in need, but commented on how it would be beneficial to have an accurate record of the kinds of programs and supports that are available to students so that less would be left to chance or serendipity.

Emily was well-informed of the formal strategies and standing practices that existed to support students with academic, behavioral, and/or substance abuse needs. She went as far to say that to a person, they would be aware of these kinds of programs that included but are not limited to, academic support, peer tutoring services through the National Honor Society during lunch periods, homework center, formalized teams of professionals to study and recommend intervention strategies for students, etc.

However, Emily was adamant that, "we're in the midst of tidal wave of people who are doing great things for kids, and it's not right that not everyone knows what they're doing." She mentioned the need for the creation of a record so that the vast supports that existed within the school could be more publicly known. Emily also discussed how localized expertise and/or

interest played a role in a teacher's ability to connect with a student. Student engagement and connections were important to Emily. She stated, "every child is an onion, and the teacher's job is to peel away every layer of that onion until you connect…and then you find that child's passion, and if I can't service that passion, I connect them to the teacher who can because it's all about connecting every child to something and/or someone they love."

Olivia quickly recited a number of formalized programs at Lafayette High School designed to support the academic, social, emotional, or wellness of the students at Lafayette. Programs included Pride Cards that promoted the demonstration of positive character, peer tutoring through the National Honor Society, homework center support after school, afterschool classes to support credit recovery, various alternative programs that supported students in the areas of behavior, academic motivation, or substance abuse, and committees of teachers who were assembled to provide strategies to teachers who had students in their classes who were struggling.

As an academy leader, Olivia, scheduled events, field trips, and/or speakers for the grade level for which she was responsible. Teachers at Lafayette High School were all members of Professional Learning Communities. They worked together to study student performance, talked about what they can do to make improvements and then made formalized plans that the members of the group were responsible for implementing. Lastly, Olivia talked to me about a highly sought after Student of the Month award in which the faculty and administration worked together to select a student from each grade level. She noted that they often took a calculated risk and named a student who might be on the "fringe" in order to increase the engagement of that student.

On the less structured side, teachers were reportedly meeting with students. Olivia stated, "I do a lot of my own one on one, pulling the kids aside, whoever it might be and, you know, just having that heart to heart mom/teacher/everything talk." Olivia reported that she would modify assignments, empower students with tasks to give them ownership, and/or leverage her relationships with other teachers who may have had success with a particular student.

Ava eagerly described a series of programs that existed for academically vulnerable students including a drop-in homework help center for all students and a targeted academic assistance program that ran after school. She also talked about programs targeted for students with behavioral challenges as well as substance abuse issues. She was aware of a credit recovery program as well as an alternative school that existed to support students who were not attaining academic success. Ava mentioned that there was a substantial, comprehensive set of clubs at Lafayette High School aimed at supporting the interests and diversity of the student body. She cited clubs for Latino and/or Hispanic students, an international alliance club, a Gay Straight Alliance, a gospel choir, and a multitude of offerings to support the academic interests of students in reading, writing, mathematics, science, music, fine and performing arts, debate, etc.

While it was not formalized, Ava described how the student assistance counselor and a language teacher visited local churches and community centers to speak with non-English speaking parents who may be intimidated by the formal structures of the school. Ava stated, "they go out because parents won't come here, because English is not their first language. So they're intimidated. So it's nice that they're going out into their community, because a lot of the parents are really involved in their church." She described how they talked with parents about how to access grades, how the school functions, and how to advocate for their children at school.

This was not a school program, nor were these teachers paid for this work or their time. They seemingly did this out of general concern for their students.

Michael discussed the need to increase parental involvement and acknowledged the work of the district and the school to translate documents in a multitude of languages so that the parents of students could be more engaged. He also had worked to support the creation of clubs, budgeted for the creation of programs to support the academic, social, and/or behavioral needs of students, and advocated for stronger connections with students through faculty meetings and communications from his office.

Michael placed a profound and important focus on establishing and building relationships with students and community members. To that end, he attributed the success of the informal structures that existed to the relationships that have been established. It was clearly a core piece of his work as a principal and he mentioned that it was difficult and exhausting work that he approached strategically.   He cited examples of teachers who were, "wiling to break down barriers with students…but that happens almost on a case by case basis. It's a grassroots, informal structure that needs to be built, but it's in place largely because of the teachers and their commitment to the school and the kids."

Madison enjoyed working for her principal, Michael. She mentioned that he provided her with clear expectations for how the administration should approach their work, but also provided her with flexibility to execute her responsibilities in ways that were fluid and beneficial to her students. Madison worked closely with the Academy Leader assigned to the grade level for which she was primarily responsible. She described that the building administration had identified the need to improve the rates of credit acquisition for students who received free

and/or reduced lunch. Along with their principal, the administration had individually identified each student and connected them to a program and/or adult within the school. By doing so, she argued that it was the expectation of the administration that a strong sense of shared responsibility along with meaningful individual connections with students that will lead to higher student academic achievement.

The breaking down of barriers was a key strategy for Madison and she mentioned that she had played an important role in ensuring that non-English speaking parents at Lafayette had access to information that would assist them in supporting their children. Madison was bilingual and her skills in this area were purposefully and directly employed with both students and parents. She described a Latino night where parents were invited to Lafayette High School to learn about how to support their students, how to get involved, and how to best utilize the existing systems to maximize their involvement. Madison cited that the administration relied on teachers who were also bilingual in various languages to assist them with translations. She described how the administration sought to expand the program to other languages as well.

Madison cited the strength of the District's character education program as having a positive impact upon the culture of the school. She mentioned that the themes of breaking down barriers, building a sense of strong community, understanding, acceptance, and respect were strategically identified as core competencies that all students and staff members should be able to demonstrate. Madison stated that the administration was working with teachers to imbed these concepts into the curriculum, institute formal programs, clubs, activities that supported them, and then both subtly and deliberately incorporate them into the total school program. She said, "so for us it's about breaking down those barriers and figuring out that we need to be a community

together, because we can't assume we know everything by the way someone looks or where they

live."

Jacob also mentioned the existence of both the formal and informal practices, procedures,

and policies that existed at Lafayette High School. He cited a plethora of formal supplemental

services and programs that existed within the school to support the academic, social, and/or

behavioral needs of students. Jacob also mentioned the critical nature of making individualized

connections with students. While he explained that this was a stated expectation, its

implementation was pervasive, but far less formalized and articulated within the school.

Sophia mentioned the importance of strategically addressing the matter of empathy

among teachers and students. In doing so, she coordinated a specialized program that was

designed to build empathy and help staff members and students to connect on a more

personalized level. Since the program had imposed limitations regarding the number of

participants, staff members and students were carefully selected for the purpose of increasing

engagement, relatedness, and a sense of belonging.

Sophia explained that there was a building goal of increasing the acquisition of credit for

students who were receiving free and/or reduced lunch. She mentioned that teachers were

expected to be working with small groups of teachers to develop strategies that would lead to

fewer class failures among this cohort of students. Sophia worked closely with grade level

leaders to promote greater student success. In addition, she identified a comprehensive list of

resources and programs that were available to all students. Like her colleagues, Sophia

acknowledged the importance of establishing relationships and explained how she and her

administrative colleagues felt strongly about supporting the many informal structures and

relationships that existed between students and staff due to the positive impact that they were

having on the students at Lafayette High School

Community/Local Context

Researchers have indicated that it is important to explore the extent to which oppression

results from inaction (Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Theoharis, 2007; Ottley, 2007; Slobodzian &

Lugg, 2006). Through the failure to confront issues of oppression, the status quo is never

addressed, thus, leading to the potential for elevated conditions of apathy where concerns are not

addressed and marginalized students continue to experience isolation and no process for them to

be ameliorated.

The participants in this dissertation unanimously confirmed that socioeconomics played a

prominent role in the experiences of certain students at Lafayette High School. The Township of

Lafayette is uniquely positioned between Petersville, a wealthy suburb and Thomasville, a large,

urban community plagued with increased levels of poverty. Students who attended Lafayette

High School who lived in close proximity to Thomasville were described as generally lacking

needed resources to be academically successful. The central administration, building

administration, and teaching staff were widely described as being sensitive to this local dynamic.

The participants in this study all openly discussed how they were engaged in on-going

conversations and actively seeking strategies to mitigate for socioeconomic conditions and

inequalities that they generally had little control over. Rather than avoiding the issue, they were

deeply engaged in what were described as difficult conversations that were meant to address the

underlying social and economic realities associated with teaching children who live in poverty.

Emma mentioned that she enjoyed working with the diverse population at Lafayette High School. She noted that the socioeconomic diversity of the school became more noticeable over time, and that students who lived in homes that bordered Petersville were generally more affluent than those who bordered Thomasville. While this geographic dichotomy played a much more significant role in the general perceptions of many of the participants in this dissertation, Emma was clear to acknowledge its existence, but did not dwell on it. She described a specific neighborhood where low-income housing existed. She seemingly did this to illustrate how this local context was important in the identification of potentially vulnerable students.

Isabella described the local dynamic that existed between Thomasville and Petersville and the extent to how that shaped the experiences of the students living in Lafayette. She too mentioned a specific neighborhood where subsidized housing exists and said that she wondered about how to best support the students who attend Lafayette from that section of town with needed resources.

Isabella was proud about the sense of community that existed at Lafayette and how that ultimately benefited students. She said, "I do think we really know our kids, whether you're talking about the security guards, or the secretaries at the front office who know the families and the kids, or the teachers themselves, or the administrators. There's not too many kids in the building that we don't know and I think we do a really good job about supporting kids as a community."

Emily mentioned how the town of Lafayette was essentially balkanized by ethnicity and that the geographic boundaries were drawn by major roadways that intersected the community. She too was clear that socioeconomics was the issue that was used to define the Lafayette

community. Emily described the role that economics played in the way that students are supported at Lafayette. She too extensively discussed a particular neighborhood near Thomasville where there was subsidized housing and the role that proximity to either Thomasville or Petersville played in the experiences of students at Lafayette High School.

Olivia also noted that she appreciated and valued the diverse student body and made a point about how Lafayette High School represented a microcosm of the nation. "We have every socioeconomic level. We have every education level, ethnicity, languages…it ranges so greatly here. And now that tracking is sort of a bad word in public education, I have all these kids in one day, in one class, in front of me. So I think that's really, really cool, because that's reality." That said, Olivia noted that despite her best efforts each day, it remained a challenge to be sure to reach each student every day.

Student engagement was a key initiative at Lafayette High School and Olivia reported that priorities at Lafayette were mainly centered on socioeconomics and the dichotomy that existed between those students who reside on or near the Petersville border versus those who reside closer to the Thomasville border. Olivia notes that she and her colleagues received regular and frequent direction on how they were expected to increase the levels of achievement and achievement for students designated with low socioeconomic status. Individual students were not identified, and Olivia acknowledged that she understood that the administration did this so that teachers would focus on the engagement and achievement of all students.

Ava confirmed the wide socioeconomic range that existed in Lafayette that was predominately defined by proximity to either Thomasville or Petersville. "So we go from the very, very wealthy to the homeless here and we have to work hard to meet everyone where they

are…but it's very hard sometimes." Ava mentioned how the main differentiator in Lafayette was socioeconomics. All other demographic identifiers played a less pronounced role in student access to academic success.

The students in Lafayette attended one of four neighborhood elementary schools and then all came together in grade 4 at one intermediate school, proceeded to one middle school, and finished their education at Lafayette High School. From fourth grade on, every student in Lafayette attended a centralized school, which Michael attributed to the success of his school. He noted that it was not common for students to segregate themselves along racial lines. Rather, he mentioned that the District had made a concerted effort to prepare students to appreciate the diversity that existed with the community, thus, affording them unique opportunities to be more ably prepared for the diversity that exists in society.

Like his teachers, Michael specifically described the elements of socioeconomic and class structures that existed in Lafayette due to its proximity to either Thomasville or Petersville. The racial and socioeconomic diversity as described by Michael were the, "cornerstone of our work. Aside from the academics, our kids are learning how to coexist with kids who are different, whether it be socioeconomically or along racial lines or whatever the case may be and you know, that's something that really helps prepare our kids as people for the world beyond high school."

Michael described Lafayette High School as a supportive place with enormous pride. He mentioned the importance of providing opportunities for students to develop strong academics and a strong sense of character and had been deliberate in his approach to promoting the concept of what he called, "oneness, you know E pluribus Unum" for this community. It was important to him that his students and faculty understood that acceptance is a core skill and valued to be a

core contributor to success at Lafayette, that there is an expectation that personalization of instruction and relationships exist, and that if it is done well, students will be better positioned for success both inside and outside of the classroom.

Madison was clear to discuss how proximity to either Thomasville or Petersville played the most prominent role within the socioeconomic context of Lafayette High School. That said, she described that this was a context that she did not hear students speaking about to her or with one another. However, she indicated that it was a topic that many of the adults in Lafayette talked about on a regular basis.

Jacob spent a considerable amount of time talking about the local context that existed in Lafayette involving the socioeconomics associated with living in close proximity to either Thomasville or Petersville. He appreciated the benefits that this provided students at Lafayette High School as he described Lafayette as a microcosm of the nation and noted that students in Lafayette, "learn how to work out their differences and learn to live together." The result, according to Jacob, is much greater integration of students that transcended demographic lines, and friendships and cliques that formed around the specific interests of students.

Sophia mentioned that she appreciated the diverse student body that attended Lafayette High School. She further described that in the short time that she had worked at the school, she was pleasantly surprised by how well the students got along and the lack of divisions that existed along racial lines. She explained that it was vitally important within the Lafayette community to build relationships with students, faculty members, and parents. Sophia spent a great deal of time forging connections and building trust through phone calls to parents, meetings with parents, and collaborating with her colleagues to build her credibility with students and parents. Sophia

explained the important dynamic of being situated between Thomasville and Petersville and the role that played in how students experience life and subsequently, how teachers structured lessons for students.

Equity and Fairness

Justice and fairness are central to Rawls' discussion of social justice (Rawls, 1971). The study of how these two principles shaped the experiences of students at Lafayette High School is vital to gaining a better understanding of why this school is so successful in this area. The participants in this dissertation, discussed the social, moral, and ethical imperatives associated with ensuring that all students had access to a similar experience. Through their stories, each participant noted they sought strategies, practices, and/or policies that were intended to mitigate for inequities resulting from their students' basic identifiers and/or personal stations in life.

Through an acknowledgement of these existing inequities, the principles of social justice as defined by Rawls may be more effectively enacted (Brewer, 2013; Chambers, 2012; Rawls, 1971; 2001; Rogers, 1999). The enactment of Rawls' Difference Principle was embraced at Lafayette High School. That said, fairness is not always equal and equal is not always fair at Lafayette High School as there was an acknowledgment by the participants in this dissertation that inequities aimed at leveling the playing field were not only permissible, they were expected if the most vulnerable students at Lafayette High School were going to supported towards successful outcomes.

Emma's definition of social justice was grounded in the concept of the equality of social structure. Her working knowledge of the term meant that the school would ensure that everyone has access to whatever they needed in order to succeed, and her focus was largely on students

who were economically disadvantaged. Lafayette High School had instituted a 1:1 laptop

initiative. This initiative was designed to provide all students with equivalent access to

technology. That said, all students did not have access to the internet in their homes, which

required teachers to print out documents for students who may have needed them through self-

reporting.

Lafayette High School grappled with the complicated concept that some students may be

treated more fairly than others. Concerns existed around the balancing of student accountability

with accessibility. That said, Emma reported that the school administration was focused on

helping students to be successful without enabling complacency. Emma was upfront about her

potential biases. As Rawls suggested, the veil of ignorance plays an important role in the

implementation of socially just conditions (Rawls, 1971). To that end, Emma stated, "there's the

fine line between differentiating and profiling…and that's the hard thing. Am I profiling or

differentiating? You know, what's the difference between the two?" It was important to Emma

that she recognize her own bias as it related to poverty and race and be able to systematically

find ways to support other students who may not stand out because of their race. Ultimately, she

understood the priority to welcome all students. Emma stated, "and I think that's part of it, is that

okay, you're just like anybody else, you know, as far as I'm concerned, and you're in my

classroom. You're here to learn, just like everybody else. So it doesn't matter to me, you know,

what your background is, what you're doing, or who you're doing it with. I'm going to help you

to be successful."

Isabella's background as a Canadian shaped her perspective on the government's role in

ensuring that conditions of equity and fairness are implemented to all members of society. She

stated that she had a core belief that society could be doing a better job of enabling people to be able to care for themselves through social programming. Within a much broader context, Isabella expressed the need for the continuation of programming such as free and reduced lunch programs, and universal preschool to mitigate and equalize conditions for students living in poverty. Emily recounted a story involving a student with special needs, who was accommodated in very significant ways so that he could have access to a similar program as his peers. The administration and teachers at Lafayette moved the location of all of his classes to the first floor of the school due his physical limitations.

Olivia noted that the term, social justice was not a term that was used at Lafayette High School. That said, she cited that the school did focus on the principles associated with social justice. To do that, access to all programming became an important concept at Lafayette. There was open access to honors and advanced placement coursework, all of the academies were self-selecting by student interest, and various layers of a similar topic were available to students for the purpose of engaging more students. For example, students may have engaged in Model Congress, but they may also have engaged in field trips to the State House to learn more about the legislative branch of government. They may also have engaged in both or none at all. The Academy structure at Lafayette was designed to provide opportunities for students that are outside of the general curriculum and accessible to all students.

Lafayette had utilized technology as an equalizer. Students in Lafayette all had individualized technology that Olivia described as game changer for both students and teachers. All students in Lafayette had equal access to same technology as their peers. All students had access to excellent technology and there was no longer reason for students to cite a lack of access

to technology or the use of inferior technology as a barrier to their success. Teachers utilized a consistent platform and had been planning together to coordinate instruction and assessments.

The interplay of equity and fairness was important to Olivia. She described how she was willing to modify assignments so that they were accessible to all students and addressed issues of fairness and equity through a lens of doing what is right for her students and all students having access to receiving an "A" on the assignment and/or course. Olivia was ultimately unwavering in her perception that it was the right thing to do. However, this was a clear source of conflict for her as she grappled aloud during the interview with what was a series of assurances that she was doing right by her students.

Stripping barriers and increasing access to programs and supports that promoted student success, academic achievement, and student engagement were primary goals of the staff at Lafayette High School. Students who demonstrated financial obstacles were always accommodated for. "Michael always finds money for the kids and our teachers will work to find free activities...we know who the kids are who need financial assistance, and I would hope that they would feel safe to ask for help when they need it."

The curriculum at Lafayette High School had been modified to reflect a more diverse student body. According to Ava, courses that incorporated titles written by non-white authors of both genders had become increasingly popular with students. That said, Ava noted that the English department, while committed to providing students with access to alternative text, were still seeking ways to maintain titles that are regarded as part of the literary canon. Students with special needs were all assigned case managers to ensure that mandated services were met.

Lafayette High School had been a school that had consistently embraced the principles of social justice. According to Michael, students had historically been open about their sexual orientation, and students have always been made to feel comfortable and safe. A previous principal, who was openly gay was attributed with positively contributing to a culture of acceptance. In addition to strong academics, Michael had established strong character development as a priority for his school. To that end, he expected his teachers to weave these core competencies into their daily instruction. Regardless of the reason, he also expected that students who appear to be isolated, oppressed, or unsupported were identified and subsequently supported by an adult in the school.

Michael reported that the district was cognizant of the income inequities that existed in Lafayette and had worked to increase opportunities for access to technology through an individual laptop initiative. He mentioned that these discussions were held at high levels of the organization through the Board of Education, Superintendent, and central office administration. He stated, "the idea of fairness isn't always getting people the same, but getting people what they need." In addition, he discussed the importance of advocacy and ensuring that his teachers, staff members, and assistant principals were identifying marginalized students and solutions to mitigate for these conditions.

Madison noted the need for flexibility when it came to accommodating students. For example, she talked about the role that cultural awareness plays in her work with teachers and students. Madison spoke with me about how she helped teachers to understand that perceived disrespect from students may be an unintended consequence of the student feeling marginalized in a much broader context. In her role she is largely focused on conflict resolution, and Madison

was dedicated to confronting issues of conflict for the purpose of mitigating feelings of oppression as well as strengthening relationships between adults and students.

Jacob indicated that treating every student fairly and providing them with equal access to excellent programming were two prevailing concepts of importance at Lafayette High School. To that end, the administration at Lafayette High School sought to provide greater access to advanced level coursework through a waiver process. Jacob talked about the pressure he received from some faculty members to engage in tracking of lower performing students. Rather, he and the administration had taken the strong position that they will not place students in multiple levels according to real or perceived academic ability and/or performance. He stated that this has been clearly communicated to the teachers and was not a negotiable item.

Jacob was emphatic in his belief that all students have an equal voice at Lafayette High School, "but not everyone comes with the same set of luggage for the journey." Thus, he noted that it was the responsibility of the administration and teachers to find ways to mitigate for inequities, thus increasing opportunities for accessibility to quality programs, coursework, and heightened levels of achievement. Jacob stated that he was mindful of his own biases as an African-American male and sought to actively challenge generalizations regarding race, socioeconomics, and/or gender.

The curriculum was a place where the topics of equity and fairness were deliberately taught. Sophia cited that the English and social studies departments were highly engaged in this type of work and had structured coursework aimed at attracting historically marginalized students and girls. According to Sophia, courses in gender studies, multiethnic literature, and themes involving ethical dilemmas, bullying, and the human experience had become popular

among students and were offered for the purpose of attracting students to engaging, challenging coursework that seeks to explore topics in alternate ways.

Sophia confirmed that socioeconomics played a much more pronounced role in Lafayette than any other demographic qualifier. Thus, she mentioned that the Board of Education, central administration, and her principal had made ensuring that all students, particularly those who were from low-income families had access to rigorous coursework, were supported, had high expectations placed upon them, and were successful.

Transformational Leadership

School leaders play an enormously important role in shaping the conditions at schools that have the principles of social justice imbedded in their day to day functions (Brown, 2004; 2006; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Kose, 2009; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Riehl, 2000). Lafayette High School was led by a new administration that openly sought to engage students and faculty members in thoughtful dialogue aimed at supporting all students. Above all other factors, the administration at Lafayette identified socioeconomic status as the primary barrier preventing students from breaking through the existing hegemony. Thus, there was wide agreement from the participants in this dissertation that the socioeconomically disadvantaged students are likely to be the most marginalized, and the administration has deliberately made this an area of focus. School leaders are best positioned to make positive change for students when they are able to clearly confront and identify issues of importance, articulate their belief system and expectations around issues of social justice, and provide supports to teachers that empower them to behave and teach in ways that are aimed at the promotion of social justice (Brown, 2004; 2006; Furman &

Gruenwald, 2004; Kumashiro, 2000; 2001; 2009; Marshall, 2004; Marshall & Oliva, 2010;

Rusch, 2004; Shields, 2004; Theoharis, 2009).

The fostering of fairness, justice, and equality are described as fundamental moral

components that if enacted well by school leaders can seek to eradicate injustices and stimulate

respect, empathy, and democracy (Asher, 2007; Bates, 2006; Calderwood, 2003; Rawls, 1971;

Theoharis, 2007; 2009). The central office and building level leadership were credited with

challenging injustices and finding ways to mitigate barriers through providing teachers with

opportunities to collaborate with one another to solve problems. It is a critical attribute of social

justice leaders to accept and embrace student difference within the context of the total school

program (Frattura & Capper, 2007; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Theoharis, 2009).

The Board of Education and Superintendent of the Lafayette Schools as well as the

building principal at Lafayette High School provided human and financial resources to support

access to rigorous programming designed to foster equitable conditions for all students. Apple

(2004) posits that the dynamic that exists between the formal and informal, hidden curriculum

plays a prominent role in shaping the culture, shared values, and operational structures of a

school. The policymakers and leadership at Lafayette High School supported the implementation

of an inclusive curriculum and the development of coursework that would uniquely address

issues of power associated with white middle class males and supported a commitment to

preparing students for life beyond Lafayette High School. In doing so, voice is given to

marginalized students so that all students are afforded equal access to curriculum that is relevant

and challenging to historically normative ideologies.

The administration at Lafayette High School was consistently described as student-centered and supportive. They were open to ideas and found ways to support the implementation of those ideas through the building budget as well as through the central administration of the District. Emma reported, "one thing that I love about this administration, is that it's very much a team effort, which I really enjoy, which I really like, which hasn't always been the case" here at Lafayette High School. There was clarity for the faculty on what was important to the administration and that had been helpful in avoiding confusion about the direction being set by the administration. This had led to a general sense of satisfaction as reported by the participants in this dissertation as the current administration had seemingly been able to strike an appropriate balance between being directive and open-minded. Emma stated, "We've had administrators who have been very directive and that leaves people annoyed, we've have administrators who give too much choice, and that leaves people confused about what to do, and then we've have administrators that are like let's sit and [sing] Kumbaya around the fireplace, and it going to work out just fine…and none of these approaches has worked at all, so I think finding balance is important."

Isabella stated, "so when we have students who are falling through the cracks, we are responsible for identifying them, talking to guidance, calling home. The expectation is just there." Isabella credited the building administration with identifying a building goal around raising the credit acquisition percentage for economically disadvantaged students. She noted that it was well known and accepted that this subgroup was academically underperforming their peers.

Social issues and character development were important areas of focus at Lafayette High School and Isabella reported that the current administration was thoughtful about increasing the levels of student engagement and connectedness at Lafayette High School. To that end, 200 students who were prone to bullying were identified by either their teachers, counselors, or the administration to participate in a two-day program designed to make them feel less alienated and more connected to the community. Isabella noted that the program and its objectives were widely publicized, that consensus among students and faculty members was positive, and that the administration did a fine job identifying this an area of focus.

Emily was highly supportive of her principal. She recognized that he was well-intended, respected, and put the best interest of students first. She noted that he would be willing to support any program that would benefit his students, but was oftentimes constrained by financial resources. Emily was a pragmatist. She knew that the central administration was focused on passing district budgets since they can't accomplish their mission, increase the numbers of advanced placement courses, improve character education, or work towards positive outcomes for students if financial resources were insufficient to support their vision.

Olivia described a palpable change in the way that the current administration functioned. She mentioned that the current administration set priorities well, established the need to accomplish those priorities, and communicated the sentiment that they were all in this together. She spoke to the sense of trust that existed between the teachers and the administration and that it emanated from a belief that, "they truly try to listen and understand what it is you want to do, or are trying to do, and they really legitimately try to support that." That said, Olivia described a focused resolve on ensuring that student achievement among students of lower socioeconomic

status increased, that student engagement in classroom increased, and that all students were engaged in focused growth.

Olivia reported that her building administration was unwavering in their quest to meet the needs of all students, and that the Superintendent of Schools and central administration had set a district goal of supporting students who were at-risk. She credited the Superintendent of Schools for establishing the priority and expectation that all teachers and administrators were responsible for addressing underperforming children and having a plan for how to meet their needs. She cited the Superintendent's opening day remarks where three types of students were described. Olivia referenced being talked to about those students who needed to pushed, those that need to be pulled, and those that are so independent that they could be let go and monitored.

Olivia talked about the important message being communicated from the central office. She stated, "they have made it very clear that we're all aware that we are a diverse district, with kids from every walk of life, and we need to make sure we take every kid from where they are and see growth. That is a clear message."

Ava described how maintaining a strong sense of community was important to the central and building administration in Lafayette. Ava noted that the new administration at Lafayette High School valued respect for teachers and students. She appreciated the high levels of accountability for student engagement and appropriate behavior, and acknowledged the flexibility and respect they showed for students when discipline was meted to students. In referring to her administrators, Ava stated, "They are kind to everyone and give consequences, where needed. They are tough, but also flexible, and I've seen them work with kids to accommodate family issues or part-time jobs when needed." The allocation of human and

financial resources was noted as an area that the administration was trying to balance and acknowledged that the current building administrators were always supportive of creative programs that would positively impact the students. Ava stated that, "the administration will do anything to support our students. They will shift resources, let us be creative, and find ways to make things happen."

Resource allocation is an area that Michael spent a lot of time thinking through. He stated, "this is what we're about, this is what we need to do next, and as far as our school goals go, these are things that I need to put money into to support my kids, but I need to be smart about how I do it, because there are limited financial resources and central office will support me, but I better have a good reason for it." He expressed great respect for his Superintendent and central office team and lauded them for always being willing to support the needs of his building and students. He also sought to utilize creative funding sources from within the community.

Michael was clear that his expectations mattered. He maintained that his expectations for student achievement were high and that the clearest path to breaking down barriers for students was for the adults in his school to build strong relationships with students. While he recognized that contractual limitations may have prevented some things from happening in a formal way, Michael asserted that his teachers and staff relied upon an extensive matrix of informal activities that benefited students in positive ways.

Madison cited the importance of the leadership team working to consistently support the standing practices and policies of the school. She described how the leadership team actively leveraged the formal and informal relationships that existed within the construct of the school to assist students. For example, students with special needs such as special education or English as

a Second Language (ESL) services had case managers who were routinely consulted when issues would arise. The administration at Lafayette was collaborative and actively relied upon known relationships to mitigate and solve student or organizational problems.

The Superintendent and central office of Lafayette were described as supportive of efforts aimed at fairness and equality. Madison stated, "we need to meet our kids where they come in the door, and I would say our superintendent understands that completely and is in support of that." Madison stated that the central office was generally eager to provide financial support to new initiatives that supported students with unique needs, but then expected the building administration to incorporate the continuation of programming during the budget process.

Jacob noted that expectations were very clear from both his principal as well as the central office. Jacob stated, "Michael always reminds us that for some of these kids, the parents that don't come in, we've got to be the voice for these kids." As a result, Jacob understood his responsibility to find ways to support vulnerable students at Lafayette and to provide strong advocacy as well as a voice to those students who may not have had an adult at home to do it for them. These actions served to prevent the marginalization of students at Lafayette High School.

Jacob specifically discussed the strong role that the Superintendent of Schools and central office played as he approached his work. In Lafayette, the Superintendent's beliefs and expectations were clear. She would not support the tracking of students and empowered her administration to be creative in their work. Jacob indicated that the Superintendent, central office, administration, and his principal all had clear direction that it was the expectation of the Superintendent that all students would be provided with ample supports to promote their success.

Sophia credited her principal for setting a strong agenda for increasing student engagement in meaningful ways. She mentioned how she worked informally with teachers to create small teams of teachers who worked with students, cared about their success and were well-known to the students. She communicated the importance of building flexibility into the process so that adjustments could be made. She appreciated the support of the central office and particularly the Superintendent, who had set a clear vision for working with students that focused on personalization of instruction, support, and student outcomes.

Summary of Chapter

Based upon the data collected from the participants in this dissertation, Lafayette High School was a school where the principles of justice were strongly imbedded within the culture of the school. Each participant in this dissertation talked with purpose and passion about the myriad ways that through an acknowledgment of the inequities that existed within the context of this public high school, student programs and access to those programs were made accessible to students so that the principles of liberty, equity, and fairness were actively implemented for all students. The leadership at Lafayette High School was committed to enacting democratic principles and minimizing instances of oppression among the students who attended Lafayette High School.

Lafayette High School was a well-ordered school that was seemingly structured in ways that are safe and supportive for students. Rawls asserted that members of society should imagine a politically and socially stable environment that protects its citizens from hardship (Rawls, 1971; 2001). Lafayette High School sought to attain this goal. Administrators, teachers, and staff members were widely encouraged and expected to form personal relationships with students

aimed at promoting conditions that supported and encouraged all members of the school

community to implement conditions targeted to improve conditions of social justice. The

interplay of the formal versus the informal was a most prominent theme at Lafayette High

School. While the teachers who participated in this dissertation described the lack of formality as

a phenomenon that needed to be addressed, recorded, and distributed, the administrators

recognized this serendipity as vital to the core mission of the school of breaking down barriers

and providing all students with increased levels of access and support to promote higher levels of

achievement and engagement. All that said, the teachers who participated in this dissertation

appreciated the fact that their administration allowed for the existence of serendipity because it

led to a multi-layered system of empowerment for students, teachers, and administrators.

The existence of policies and/or procedures that protect students, specific training(s) that

promote conditions of social justice, outlets for students to express themselves, and the existence

of topical social issues within the curriculum are all strong factors that contribute to positive

school climates (Varjas, et al., 2007). Lafayette High School incorporated all of these and

recognized the need for a social contract that promotes morality, equity, and fairness for all

students (Chambers, 2012). The participants of this study desired conditions of equity and

excellence for their students and were excited about the journey in getting there.

The teachers and administration at Lafayette High School demonstrated that they trusted

their principal. They were loyal to him, seemingly shared his vision, and thus, showed him great

cooperation. While a public definition of social justice was not evident, the participants in this

dissertation all agreed that they must work individually and collectively towards social

cooperation and the pursuit of the concept of good outcomes for themselves and their students.

The principal of this school, Michael considered much more that test data and the closing of an achievement gap. While a prominent feature of Michael's work is to consider outcomes from test data and the closing of the achievement gap, he was deeply committed to preparing his students as citizens who were related to the faculty and staff in his school, and the role that race, class, gender, socioeconomics, disability, and/or sexual orientation played in issues of power, privilege, and inequality.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This qualitative dissertation described the various policies enacted by teachers and administrators at Lafayette High School aimed at social justice. The data were collected through a single case study (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). While it may seem like a simple investigation, it is actually quite complex since the term policy was broadly defined as all of the formal rules adopted by the Board of Education, standing practices that may have existed at Lafayette School District and/or at Lafayette High School, and the enactment of both the typical and idiosyncratic practices and/or behaviors of teachers and/or administrators at Lafayette High School. This specific dissertation became so compelling due to the nature that students were the direct beneficiaries of the enacted actions. Through the concepts outlined in John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice*, the answer to this research question through the findings of this dissertation serve to begin to develop a more complete profile of a public high school enacting the principles of fairness and equality. As a microcosm of society, public schools are vulnerable to being plagued by the inequitable treatment of its students and it is incumbent upon the policymakers and practitioners to foster and encourage conditions that are safe, equitable, and fair for all students (Blount, 2000; Brown, 2006; Kumashiro, 2000; 2009).

The work of John Rawls was selected due to the ease of relatedness of his social justice theories to the constructs that exist within a public school setting. His positioning of justice as fairness as the central component of his theory regarding how government ought to structure itself if it is to be well-ordered, accessible to all, and grounded in the principals of liberty and

equality became an integral part of this dissertation (Rawls, 1971). That said, in the absence of

knowledge regarding the work of Rawls at Lafayette High school, it was important for me to

understand the extent to which the core concepts of his work were enacted, and thus, positive

outcomes concerning conditions of fairness and equity being enjoyed by students there

(Chambers, 2012; Rawls, 1971; 2001; Rogers, 1999).

As I came to better understand the conditions at Lafayette High School, principles of

equity and fairness emerged as prominent themes and were eventually coded as a major finding

as they were routinely put into practice by the participants of this dissertation. While it was not

deliberate or consciously implemented with this purpose in mind, this finding supported Rawls'

theories of both the Original Position and Difference Principle. All of the participants discussed

their own individual need to provide more attention and resources to students who were from

lower socioeconomic families. Moreover, throughout the organization, there was an awareness

and expectation that benefits needed to be provided to less advantaged students for the purpose

of mitigating hardships or inequalities. These actions served to provide the most compelling

evidence that Lafayette High School was a place where the principles of social justice were

enacted. Participants reported that a principle tenet of the school culture was that fairness and

equity were the primary drivers leading to the belief that all students should experience success.

Similar to the theory posited through Rawls' Original Position, Lafayette High School seemingly

identified the concepts of fairness and equality as vitally important, thus, affirming, Rawls'

arguments involving the veil of ignorance (Chambers, 2012; Rawls, 1971; 2001; Rogers, 1999).

Findings in Light of Research

      Social justice is generally agreed to pertain to conditions concerning historically marginalized students who are subjected to being oppressed (Aleman, 2009; Calderwood, 2003; Dessel, 2010; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Kumashiro, 2000; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Theoharis, 2007; 2009). As power historically rests with heterosexual, wealthy, Caucasian men, it is essential that the access to power and opportunity be able to transcend this narrow base of power and be expanded to individuals regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation/identity, dis/ability, immigrant status, culture, or home language (Scheurich & McKenzie, 2006). Since there will always be a group of individuals in need of some form equity, it is vital that public schools enact policies and practices aimed at leveling conditions for students whose life circumstances may not enable them to equitably access to programs and services.

      Neither the existence of a set of comprehensive laws in the State of New Jersey, nor the ample policies within the Lafayette School District seemed to play a role in influencing the standing practices and/or behaviors of the participants in this dissertation. This finding was ironic and surprising since the extant literature was clear that the existence of formal policies aimed at social justice was a key component in the success of schools where conditions of social justice are enacted (Aleman, 2009; Birden, Gaither, & Laird, 2000; Buckel, 2000; Calderwood, 2003; Conoley, 2008; Dessel, 2010; Dupper & Adams, 2002; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Kumashiro, 2001; 2003; 2009; Lugg, 1998; 2008; Macgillivray, 2000; Marshall, 2004; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Mayo, 2007; Opfer, 2006; Payne, 2007; Russo, 2006; Sanelli & Perreault, 2001; Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004; Theoharis, 2009; Verdugo & Flores, 2007). In contrast, the teachers and administrators seemed to consider the existence of these laws/policies represented mores that were well established and seen as common sense practices for them as educators.

Rather, while it was probed in every semi-structured interview, in the very few instances when formal policies were expounded upon directly by the participants, it was approached by each participant in a manner that described the existence of these laws and/or policies to be generally well understood by the teachers and administration at Lafayette High School.

The school's culture of shared values played an enormously important role in how schools function, and the existence of a positive school culture can have a profoundly positive impact on students (Dupper & Meyer-Adams, 2002; Varjas et al., 2007). As described by the participants, the students and staff at Lafayette High School enjoyed a school culture marked by shared values that promoted acceptance, resilience, and an awareness of a social contract that promotes conditions of fairness and equality for all students. These values seemed to play a significant role in the culture of the school and all of the participants described how these values influenced their ability to promote socially just conditions. Rawls addressed the importance of the existence of mutually acknowledged conceptions of justice and that a mutual doctrine was not necessarily indicative of enough evidence to support broad, sustainable conditions of social justice (Rawls, 1971; 2001).

Trust, loyalty, and cooperation are indispensable qualities that need to be shared by administrators and their staffs (Price, 2011). The principal of Lafayette High School, Michael, with his administrative colleagues, had sought to build and foster all three of these concepts. While there were certainly clear expectations that were communicated to staff from Michael and his assistant principals, the participants did not describe feeling micromanaged. Rather, they described how they felt trusted because they were given an appropriate degree of autonomy to work towards attaining their established goals. This level of autonomy and trust was deliberately

fostered according to the administrators at Lafayette High School. Consequently, the teachers with whom I interviewed expressed unequivocal loyalty to Michael and all of the participants reported high levels of cooperation among teachers and the current administration.

The social cooperation around the concepts of equity and fairness led to the emergence of strongly held beliefs and dispositions among the participants in this dissertation. The administration of Lafayette High School indicated that they had communicated that there was an expectation and duty among the staff to analyze existing social, cultural, historical, and political contexts for the purpose of exposing and mitigating conditions of injustice. By doing so, faculty, staff, and administrators were better able to proactively sustain socially just conditions for students (Ritchie, 2012). Further, through a heightened awareness, the participants were willing to advocate for a theory of anti-oppressive education both inside and outside the classroom. This was done deliberately and purposefully for the purpose of supporting a respectful, caring, and empathic school. Engaging, challenging coursework, open access to honors level and Advanced Placement® coursework, and co-curricular programs designed and targeted to recruit minorities, girls, LGBTQ, and other historically marginalized groups of students were ways that the participants in this dissertation sought to normalize the existence of tolerance, and provide equity of access to high level programs and services (Kumashiro, 2001; 2003; Theoharis, 2007; 2009). It also provided evidence to support the need to have an awareness of the Difference Principle when structuring programs and services designed to minimize conditions of oppression (Rawls, 1971; 2001).

Local leadership was key to the successes in social justice at Lafayette High School. Researchers have repeatedly reported that the role of the school leader in promoting conditions

of social justice is essential (Asher, 2007; Bates, 2006; Brown, 2004; 2006; Calderwood, 2006; Frattura & Capper, 2007; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Kose, 2009; Marshall, 2004; Marshall & McKenzie et al., 2007; Oliva, 2010; Riehl, 2000; Rusch, 2004; Shields, 2004; Theoharis, 2007; 2009). Lafayette High School was led well. Its Superintendent of Schools was described as a leader who acknowledged and valued diversity. The teachers and administrators reported that it was a basic expectation from the Superintendent, the Board of Education, and the central office that issues pertaining to equity and fairness were to be addressed and resolved and that resources would be provided if a legitimate need was effectively articulated to benefit students.

The enactment of the principles associated with moral leadership can bring about conditions of democracy, eradicate injustices, and result in policies, practices, and expectations that improve outcomes for students (Bates, 2006). This kind of leadership requires school leaders to engage in action as well as in significant conversations designed to confront and ameliorate underlying inequities. The administrators at Lafayette High School were actively engaged in this type of work. They identified engagement as a key strategy and the teachers who participated in this dissertation acknowledged the importance of engagement. Students who were identified as having a low socioeconomic status were widely regarded as students who had more pronounced needs at Lafayette High School. Consequently, through every interview, this cohort of students was identified and then a series of formal and informal practices were described to assist them. The participants in this dissertation took this work very seriously and were driven to enact teaching practices and pedagogies that sought to mitigate inequality.

An important local context at Lafayette High School was the role that geography played in the perceived experiences of students. As described earlier, students who resided near

Petersville were generally perceived as having far greater socioeconomic advantages than their peers who resided near Thomasville. That said, students within Lafayette who resided within a particular neighborhood were cited as being even more economically and socially vulnerable and thus, in need of support. Participants strongly agreed that there was an imperative to support students. This seemed to stem from a combination of common shared values in conjunction with external expectations from the district and building leadership to approach this work as a moral imperative. That said, this awareness provided benefits to students in academic, social, and political ways.

In *The Travels and Adventures of the Three Princes of Serendip,* three Persian Princes utilized their keen observational skills and enjoy a series of unintended benefits through what is seemingly happenstance (Merton & Barber, 2004). Their serendipitous adventures led them to grow personally and help others along the way. According to Emily, the administration at Lafayette High School "allows serendipity to happen." She and every other teacher who participated in this dissertation specifically mentioned the informal practices that had directly benefitted students. Teachers described serendipitous conditions with pride and a certain level of frustration, since it was their hope and expectation that the good things that were happening for students could be recorded, and thus replicated for other students. Ironically, the administrators cited serendipity as a component within a larger strategy and expected teachers to engage in creative activities that would lead to greater supports for their students. The administration cited pride and commended their teachers for developing the vast network of idiosyncratic supports that pervaded the culture at Lafayette High School.

Implications for Current Practice and Future Research

The data support the notion that local leadership and individual teachers play a critically important role in shaping positive outcomes for students. In addition, the extant research is clear about the need for formal written policies that are aimed at supporting conditions of social justice (Asher, 2007; Bates, 2006; Birden, Gaither, & Laird, 2000; Brown 2004; 2006; Buckel, 2000; Calderwood, 2006; Conoley, 2008, Dupper & Adams, 2002, Frattura & Capper, 2007; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Kose, 2009; Kozik-Rosabal, 2000; Kumashiro, 2003, Macgillivray, 2000, Marshall, 2004; Marshall & McKenzie et al., 2007; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Opfer, 2006; Riehl, 2000; Rusch, 2004; Shields, 2004; Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004; Russo, 2006; Sanelli & Perreault, 2001; Theoharis, 2007; 2009). It will be important to test and explore this dynamic in future research to determine the extent to which the existence of formal written policies and procedures plays a significant role in the attitudes, behaviors, and/or actions of teachers and administrators both with the existence of and in the absence of laws and/or local formal policies/rules at the local level.

Since this was a preliminary study, these findings are most relevant within the context of Lafayette High School. These findings also confirm what is widely posited in the extant research. Teaching and leading from a position of social justice is a potent way to facilitate conditions in schools that mitigate hegemony (Buckel, 2000; Conoley, 2008; Kozik-Rosabal, 2000; Kumashiro, 2000; 2001; Macgillivray, 2000; Russo, 2006; Varjas et al., 2007). Through this acknowledgement, readers of this dissertation may confirm in theory and/or practice the positive perceived benefits for students when a school culture is oriented in understandings of social

justice. Thus, practitioners would be able to transfer the findings of this work to inform their professional development activities within their respective schools (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

The teachers and administration at Lafayette High School noted that the school culture supported the open discussion of items related to gender, class, race, sexual orientation, disability, as well as other issues related to historically marginalized populations. This enabled them to confront issues more directly and avoid purposefully elusive conversations due to their potential for creating discomfort. Ottley (2007) described the propensity for schools to engage in oppressive niceties that results from a basic disposition to be polite. The data from this research indicate that students benefit when teachers and administrators engage in open and honest dialogue for the purpose of providing direct benefits to students. Rather than avoiding it, conflict can be leveraged to protect conditions of fairness and equity for students. Once again, this dynamic affirms the existence of and benefits that result when teachers and administrators share a trusting, collaborative relationship because the members of the organization can feel safe within an environment where conflict is permitted to exist as a vehicle to solve problems.

A secondary benefit of this research is to inform teacher and principal preparation programs so that pre-service teachers and/or pre-service leaders might better understand the qualities, dispositions, and actions that led to positive outcomes as described by the participants at Lafayette High School. This implication would seem particularly important for those who are preparing to be building level leaders. Finally, this research has the potential to affirm the powerfully positive benefits that result from strong and clear expectations from Boards of Education, Superintendents and other central office administrators. The finding of this dissertation suggests that students receive benefits when there is strong alignment between

policymakers and practitioners regarding the implementation of policies and practices aimed at the promotion of social justice.

The term policy was broadly defined within the scope and purposes of this dissertation. The balance between the formal policies with the enactment of both typical and idiosyncratic practices that are aimed at social justice served as a way for this research to utilize a wide lens for which to answer the intended research question. As such, school leaders and/or researchers who wish to explore this context may find it advantageous and beneficial to employ the same broad definition of policy as was utilized in this research.

The interplay of *serendipity versus strategy* is a concept that would benefit from future research. It will be helpful to have a better understanding of the role that informality and happenstance plays in schools that are interested in the promotion of socially just conditions. The teaching profession can be isolating and particularly cellular in nature. Additionally, the nature of teaching can lead to very individualized outcomes since there are limited opportunities for teachers to collaborate with one another (Lortie, 1975). The participants reported seeking ways to work with one another across a broad array of job titles and departments in their school. While this dissertation explores this phenomenon at one particular school, it will be beneficial to study this further to determine how and to what extent it can be replicated.

Lafayette High School is situated in the State of New Jersey and students there are fortunate to enjoy protections that are written into law and local policy that bar discrimination. To that end, future research would need to test whether the enactment and application of these laws and policies are adhered to across a wider spectrum of public high schools. This could occur within the State of New Jersey and perhaps across a wider range of schools because it will

be important to understand if the same conclusions could be made in schools in the absence of

legal and/or policy protections. The State of New Jersey has enacted laws and policies that are

supportive of and promote a sense principles associated with social liberalism. Lafayette High

School embodied and demonstrated a commitment to these principles. While this local context is

an important one, it would be useful and practical to test the practical nature of implementing

ideas rooted in social liberalism within the broader political and policy discourse that currently

exists within the American public school system where teacher accountability, annual testing of

students, and the Common Core are at the forefront of the debate and discussion across the

nation. Furthermore, it will be important to explore the extent to which other local contexts such

as budgets, community values, demographics, levels of education, etc. contribute to a public

school's ability to enact and sustain services and programs aimed at social justice.

Finally, very little research exists regarding the application of the work of John Rawls to

the work of public schools. This preliminary study examined several of the key concepts of

Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* and sought to make direct connections to the philosophies that were

intended for government and apply them directly to a public school. As an important microcosm

of society, the links of his work to public schools have been made clearer through this

dissertation. The work of Rawls is potentially complicated to unpack, yet simple in its basic

conception. If policymakers and practitioners took time to gain a better understanding of Rawls'

conception of justice as fairness, they could potentially be better positioned to enact policies and

practices that were specifically aimed at social justice.

Through a philosophical thought experiment, Rawls stipulates a completely artificial

situation through his use of the veil of ignorance (Rawls, 1971). Ironically, while Rawls' veil of

ignorance provides an important intellectual exercise for what could be, through their vast

experiences, the teachers and administrators at Lafayette High School have practical and

instantiated knowledge that afforded them the benefit of knowing what contexts existed within

their school and the actions that were essential for them to take to create equitable situations and

solution for students.

The teachers and administrators who participated in this dissertation sought to evaluate

and subsequently test their ideas about who were the least advantaged students at Lafayette High

School. They then utilized this knowledge to work towards ameliorating inequities that existed

within the system. Using a critical edge to the overall concept of democracy, the teachers and

administrators at Lafayette High School who participated in this dissertation regarded the

importance of how society was structured and used this information to inform their work. This

was most acutely apparent through the work that had been done to mitigate socioeconomic

inequities that existed for students based upon their proximity to either Thomasville or

Petersville. This relationship between the micro and macro politics of the school and community

at large provided critical understandings of the local context that permitted these professionals to

deliver needed services, recognize those lacking empowerment, and provide a level of attainment

of power within the system that they would not have had access to otherwise.

Limitations

This single case study served as an effective research method to focus on the extent to

which teachers and administrators were enacting policies aimed at social justice at Lafayette

High School (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009). While it afforded me the opportunity to gain a very

deep understanding of the implications of my research question within the research site, any

reader of this study should use these findings with caution. This dissertation is an initial study, thus making the transferability of its findings potentially difficult until such time that a similar study with a similar research question is able to successfully confirm or apply the findings outlined in this dissertation (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

While the findings of this research are confirmed by strong codes and regular patterns within the data, the relative low number of participants utilized in this study precludes the reader from making assumptions regarding all teachers and administrators at Lafayette High School as only five (n=5) teachers and four (n=4) administrators provided data for this research. Additionally, students were not interviewed as participants in this research. All of the findings within this study were self-reported exclusively by adults. Thus, any findings should be considered for risk of bias since the adult participants may have wanted to depict a more positive state of circumstances that would have been found if students were included in the research. That said, the findings of this study suggest that through the key concepts of *shared values and school culture, serendipity versus strategy, equity and fairness, community/local context,* and *transformational leadership,* a more complete profile can begin to take shape concerning how a public high school may employ principles of fairness and equity for the purpose of stimulating conditions of social justice.

Conclusions

This dissertation has traced and explored the manner in which policies and practices aimed at promoting condition of social justice were employed within a single case at Lafayette High School. Through the course of the various chapters, I have attempted to illustrate the critical importance of structuring schools in ways that provide all students with access to schools

and classrooms that are fair and just. John Rawls provided me with the conceptual framework for how I explored the concept of social justice within the contextual framework of a public school. As a public and mandatory component of American educational policy, schools are intended to provide structures for academic, social, and physical development. The concepts and constructs that are described by John Rawls are achievable within a public school system. In order for them to be successful, a recognition of the experiences of marginalized students is essential. Lafayette High School represented a fine example of how a school system can instantiate reforms aimed towards the benefit of all students.

If public schools are to be able to successfully advance a sense of political and social stability that is well-ordered, they must be structured and led in ways that promote a sense of justice that pervades all aspects of the functioning of the school. While it is clear that all students do not come to school with equitable backgrounds, schools may mitigate these inequities by embracing a Rawlsian approach to social justice. In this approach, fairness and equity are not equivalent terms. Thus, it becomes the duty of policymakers and practitioners in public schools focus on both outcomes and process in order to cultivate the principles of liberty, equity and fairness for all students.

Each day, students across the nation pledge their allegiance to the flag of The United States of America and notably state, usually aloud, that the flag represents a commitment to providing liberty and justice to all. Sadly, many students are not afforded the same basic liberties and justices that they are asked to pledge to uphold. It is time for all public schools to affirm their own allegiance to providing leadership to schools that promote caring, as well as equal, fair, respectful and democratic treatment for all children.

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APPENDIX A

Data Collection Instruments

Peter Giarrizzo
Social Justice in Schools Research Proposal
Rutgers University
February 18, 2013

Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

Professional Staff Member

1- How long have you been a teacher/administrator at this school?

2- Tell me about your career path and what made you decide to become involved in the field of education?

3- Tell me about your experiences as a teacher/administrator at this school.

    a. What the things that you really like about your school?
        i. Why?
    b. What are things that have come to frustrate you about your school?
        i. Why?

4- What do you know about the term social justice?

    a. Can you provide a working definition?
    b. In what context have you heard the term used within this school or district?

5- What are some words that you might use to describe a socially just school to:

    a. A parent/community member
    b. A teacher/staff member
    c. A building administrator
    d. A central office administrator
    e. A Board of Education member
    f. A student

6- Generally speaking, what are your thoughts or some words that would characterize how students are treated in your school?

    a. What makes you think that?

    b. How do you know?
    c. How does this make you feel?

7- How are marginalized groups of students defined in this school?

    a. Who are they?
    b. Do you agree with the groups as defined?
    c. Who marginalizes them?
    d. Are there groups that you would add? Why?
    e. Are there identified groups of students that you would not consider marginalized? Why not?

8- In your opinion, what does your school do to be sure that all students are treated equally and fairly in your school?

    a. What makes you think that?
    b. Are there specific students who get more or less?
        i. ESL, gender, white, LGBTQ, immigrants, race, etc…
    c. How do you know?

9- Describe how the experiences of some students can be different from other students in your school?

    a. What is your opinion of how different types of students (girls, ESL, LGBTQ, low SES, black, Hispanic, Asian, Caucasian are treated by:

        i. Other students?
        ii. Teachers/staff members?
        iii. Administrators?
        iv. Parents/Community members?
        v. Board of Education members

    b. How did you arrive at your opinions?

    c. Does equal access exist for all students to enroll in rigorous coursework?

10- Describe any formal policies in place that are specifically designed to address fairness and equality for all students.

    a. How do you know?
    b. Have you received professional development in administering those policies?

        i. Have they been at the building or district level?
- c. When was the last time that you read and/or reviewed them?
- d. How often do you get the chance to discuss them with your colleagues in your school? In other schools in the district?
- e. How often do you get the chance to discuss them with students?

11- Describe how the central administration in this district is engaged in making sure that the policies and practices in your school district address the needs of all kinds of students.

- a. How do you know?
- b. Do district level committees exist? If so, what are they?
- c. What kinds of conversations have you had with central office administrators

12- Describe the practices/strategies you have in place within your school to address the needs of all kinds of students?
- a. What was your involvement in their inception?
- b. What is your involvement in administering them?
- c. Describe how they were originally received by
    - i. Teachers/staff members
    - ii. Students
    - iii. Parents/community members
- d. Describe how they are currently received by
    - i. Teachers/staff members
    - ii. Students
    - iii. Parents/community members

13- In what ways are fairness and equality important in this school?
- a. How do you know?
- b. If so, who are they important to? Why do you think that is?

14- Describe what effective leadership means to you.

15- Describe how student issues of fairness and equality are handled by your building administrators?
- a. How do you know?
- b. Can you give an example?
- c. Other teachers?

16- Describe your central office leadership team.

17- Do you have anything to add?

18- Is there anything you wished I had asked you today?

Peter Giarrizzo
Social Justice in Schools Research Proposal
Rutgers University
February 18, 2013

<u>Focus Group- Interview Protocol</u>

Date:

Group Interviewed:

Interview Completed by:

"Thank you for coming today. You are being invited to participate in a dissertation study that is intended to study the experiences of students in your school. I will be investigating the specific policies aimed at social justice that exist within your school. My goal is to better understand how schools are or are not structured in socially just ways that promote fairness, equity, and safe conditions for all kinds of students in your school. The interview will be conducted by me and will be audio taped with your permission. I tape the conversation to ensure that I will have an accurate record of what was said and I will erase the recording after my research is complete.

I've brought you together today so that we can learn from each other about what is really going on in your school with regard to your experiences and your perceptions of all kinds of students in your school. This is a `no holds barred" discussion. I want to know what you're seeing, hearing, or experiencing, even if it looks, feels, or seems bad. That is the only way we are going to learn. Of course, I also want to know where things are going well, but where they are not going well too.

I am taping this session so that I can study what you have said, but it goes no farther than this group. Anything you say here will be held in strict confidence; I won't be telling people outside this room who said what. When you have something to say, please repeat your name each time. When I am listening to the tape again I will not be able to see who is speaking, and I'll need to be able to relate comments you made at different times. Anything you tell me is confidential. No one outside this room will be able to know how you responded to any of the questions I ask you today, and your name will never be used. All of my reports will be written in a manner that no individual comment can be attributed to a particular person.

I am going to ask you to sign a small group meeting contract stating that what we discuss during this session is confidential.

Your participation is this focus group is totally voluntary. Is everyone willing to begin? Does anyone have any questions before we begin?

1.   Please tell me your name, grade level, department that you currently teach in, and how long you have worked at this school.

2.   What do you like best about working here?

3.   What do you like least about working here?

4.   Here is a copy of your School District Mission Statement. Please read it and then tell me how you think your school is doing with regard to the words that are written there.

5.   What are your opinions about access to your school's honors level and/or advanced placement program?

6.   What happens in this school that makes the policies and standing practices good for students?

7.   Does tracking exist in this school?

        a. If so, how are tracks determined?
        b. If not, do you recall a time when they did?
        c. What were the circumstances surrounding their elimination?
        d. How would you describe your satisfaction with how they are determined?
        e. How would you describe your dissatisfaction with them, and how might you change it?

8.   Are there groups of students who are marginalized in this school?

        a. How are they defined here?
        b. Do you agree with how they are defined?
        c. Are there groups that you would add or delete?

9.   How might you describe to a total stranger how your school goes about meeting the needs of marginalized students in this school in a good way?

10.   Whose voices are considered in the decision making process in your school? Why?

11.   What programs or supports exist to promote the achievement and safety of various groups of students in this school?

12.   What activities exist in this school to help new students in your school and classroom?

13.   Describe an action that you have taken, participated in, or know about that assisted a marginalized student in this school?

        a. What were the circumstances around this event and describe how it made you feel.

14.   Describe an action that you have taken, participated in, or know about that led to a negative result for a marginalized student in this school.

       a.   What were the circumstances?
       b.   Describe how it made you feel.

Thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate the conversation and promise to use the information you have provided to attempt to improve the experiences of all students in this school.

Peter Giarrizzo
Social Justice in Schools Research Proposal
Rutgers University
February 18, 2013

Rutgers University

Background Information/Contact Sheet-Professional Staff Member

Title of Research Study: Social Justice in Public Schools

Principal Investigator:
Mr. Peter Giarrizzo
10 Seminary Place
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

████████ ████████

Co-Investigator and Emergency Contact
Dr. Catherine Lugg, Professor
10 Seminary Place
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

████████████████████

Directions: Please respond to **each** of the following items. *This information will be kept in the strictest confidence. The researcher is the only individual who will have access to this information.* Thank you

_____
Name of Participant

_____
Date

_____
Phone Number

_____
Email address

WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL

1. Gender (Please circle one): *Female Male*

2. What is your age in years? _____

3. Ethnicity (Please circle one):

Hispanic   *African-American*   *Native-American*

Caucasian/White   *Asian-American/Pacific Islander*

Other_____

4. What subject area do you teach or job title do you hold?

_____

5. How many years have you been a teacher/administrator in this school?

APPENDIX B

Consent Forms

Attachment 4

Rutgers University
Informed Consent Form- Individual Semi-Structured Interview
Professional Staff Member

Title of Research Study: Social Justice in Public Schools

Principal Investigator:
Mr. Peter Giarrizzo
10 Seminary Place
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

███████████

Co-Investigator and Emergency Contact
Dr. Catherine Lugg, Professor
10 Seminary Place
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

███████████

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read the following explanation of this study. This statement describes the purpose, procedures, benefits, risks, discomforts, and precautions of the research. Also described are the alternative procedures available to you, as well as your right to withdraw from the study at any time.

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Peter Giarrizzo, who is a doctoral student in the Educational Policy, Theory, and Administration Department at Rutgers University. The purpose of this research is to study, understand and describe the conditions, policies and practices that exist within a particular school that makes it socially just for all students. I am interested in how public schools that are committed to social justice are perceived by the professional staff at your place of employment. I will be investigating the specific policies, practices, and strategies that exist within your place of employment that lead to the enactment of policies aimed at social justice. My goal is to better understand how schools are or are not structured in socially just ways that promote fairness, equity, and safe conditions for all students.

Approximately 6-9 adult professional staff members will be invited to participate in the study through individual interviews, and each individual's participation will last approximately 60-90 minutes. The ages of the adult participants are unknown at this point in time.

The study procedures include an individual interview that will explore your experiences and perception of the degree to which all students are treated with fairness and equality in your place of employment. The interview will be conducted by me and will be audio taped with your permission. I tape the conversation to ensure that I will have an accurate record of what was said. I will erase the recording after my research is complete. In addition, this project will seek to engage 4-7 administrators and teachers in a small group meeting.

This research is confidential. The research records will include some information about you and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists. Some of the information collected about you includes your name, gender, age, ethnicity, subject area that you teach, and the number of years experience you have as a teacher in your current place of employment. Please note that we will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. The information gathered during this study will remain confidential in a locked draw in Mr. Giarrizzo's home office. Only Mr. Giarrizzo, Dr. Lugg, and Rutgers University Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews research studies in order to protect research participants) at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. There will not be any identifying names on the field notes, and participant names will not be available to anyone. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. All study data will be kept for three years and destroyed in June 2016.

Participant Initials_____

Attachment 4

Please note that we will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. The audio recordings will be stored on Mr. Giarrizzo's home computer hard drive in password-protected files. These sound files will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. In transcripts of these recordings, your name will not be used. Any documents you sign, where you can be identified by name will be maintained in a locked drawer in Mr. Giarrizzo's home office.

Your name and any identifying information will be changed in any write-up of the study's results. The study write-up will not state that the study took place at your place of employment.

Although, I will make every effort to maintain your confidentiality, there is a risk that your participation in this study will become know to others as the interviews are not scheduled to be held in a secure location. It is my expressed hope that your confidentiality will be maintained through this research project. I will remind you and the other participants in this study at the beginning and end of each meeting about the importance of maintaining confidentiality.

Confidentiality will only be breached if you report an incidence of child abuse. In the event that this instance occurs, the incident must be reported to your School District staff and/or necessary state authorities. This may lead to your termination as a participant in this study.

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. Your will be asked to talk about your particular experiences at your place of employment and your perceptions and/or experiences as they relate to the students in your place of employment. You do not have to participate in this study unless you choose to do so. If you feel uncomfortable during any part of an interview you could leave or skip a question. The decision to participate or not to participate will have no effect upon your professional evaluation or conditions of employment. You may also choose to terminate your participation in this study at any time.

I will ask you questions about your experiences and/or perceptions of the experiences of various types of students. These experiences may be negative or unpleasant, and you may feel uncomfortable, sad, embarrassed, or angry. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, you may ask to skip a question. You may also choose to stop an interview at any time. You may also ask that the audio recorder be turned off at any time during the interview.

You have been told that the benefits associated with participating in this research project include identifying the policies, practices, and strategies that exist within your place of employment that contribute to conditions of social justice for the students who attend your school. The results of this research may be used to inform the practices in other schools to implement policies, practices, and strategies that make schools caring, equal, fair, respectful, and democratic spaces where all children can thrive. Thus, your participation in this study may have a positive and direct benefit to many schools. However, you may receive no direct benefit from taking part in this study. There is no payment associated with participating in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose to participate, and you may withdraw from participating at any time during the study activities without any penalty. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable.

If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, you may contact me at:
    10 Seminary Place
    New Brunswick, NJ 08901
    ████████████

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews research studies in order to protect those who participate). Please contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey

APPROVED   **EXPIRES**

APR **3 0** 2013   APR **2 9** 2014

Approved by the   Approved by the
Rutgers IRB   Rutgers IRB

Participant Initials_____

Attachment 4

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 848-932-0150
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study:

Participant (Print): _____

Participant's Signature: _____   Date: _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____   Date: _____

AUDIO/VIDEOTAPE ADDENDUM TO CONSENT FORM

You have already agreed to participate in a research study entitled: entitled: Social Justice in Public Schools conducted by Peter Giarrizzo. We are asking for your permission to allow me to audiotape (sound), you as part of that research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the main part of the study.

The recording(s) will be used for the sole purpose of analysis by the researcher.

The recording(s) will include your name, and may include your age, gender, ethnicity, subject that you teach, and the years of experience you have as a professional staff member in your current place of employment.

The recordings will be stored on Mr. Giarrizzo's home computer hard drive in password-protected files. These sound files will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. In transcripts of these recordings, your name will not be used. Any documents you sign, where you can be identified by name will be maintained in a separate locked drawer in Mr. Giarrizzo's home office. A document linking a code to the participant's identity with other identifying information will be maintained in a separate locked file cabinet. All study data will be kept for three years and destroyed in June 2016.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Participant (Print): _____

Participant's Signature: _____   Date: _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____   Date: _____

Participant Initials_____

APPROVED

APR 3 0 2013

Approved by the
Rutgers IRB

EXPIRES

APR 2 9 2014

Approved by the
Rutgers IRB

Attachment 4

Rutgers University
Informed Consent Form-Focus Group Participation
Professional Staff Member

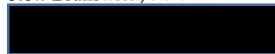**Title of Research Study:** Social Justice in Public Schools

Principal Investigator:
Mr. Peter Giarrizzo
10 Seminary Place
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

██████████████

Co-Investigator and Emergency Contact
Dr. Catherine Lugg, Professor
10 Seminary Place
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

██████████████

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read the following explanation of this study. This statement describes the purpose, procedures, benefits, risks, discomforts, and precautions of the research. Also described are the alternative procedures available to you, as well as your right to withdraw from the study at any time.

You are invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Peter Giarrizzo, who is a doctoral student in the Educational Policy, Theory, and Administration Department at Rutgers University. The purpose of this research is to study, understand and describe the conditions, policies and practices that exist within a particular school that makes it socially just for all students. I am interested in how public schools that are committed to social justice are perceived by the professional staff at your place of employment. I will be investigating the specific policies, practices, and strategies that exist within your place of employment that lead to the enactment of policies aimed at social justice. My goal is to better understand how schools are or are not structured in socially just ways that promote fairness, equity, and safe conditions for all students.

Approximately 4-7 adult professional staff members will be invited to participate in the study through one of two focus group interviews, and participation in the focus group will last approximately 60-90 minutes. The ages of the adult participants are unknown at this point in time.

The study procedures include an individual interview that will explore your experiences and perception of the degree to which all students are treated with fairness and equality in your place of employment. The interview will be conducted by me and will be audio taped with your permission. I tape the conversation to ensure that I will have an accurate record of what was said. I will erase the recording after my research is complete. In addition, this project will seek to engage 4-7 administrators and teachers in a small group meeting.

This research is confidential. The research records will include some information about you and this information will be stored in such a manner that some linkage between your identity and the response in the research exists. Some of the information collected about you includes your name, gender, age, ethnicity, subject area that you teach, and the number of years experience you have as a teacher in your current place of employment. Please note that we will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. The information gathered during this study will remain confidential in a locked draw in Mr. Giarrizzo's home office. Only Mr. Giarrizzo, Dr. Lugg, and Rutgers University Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews research studies in order to protect research participants) at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. There will not be any identifying names on the field notes, and participant names will not be available to anyone. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. All study data will be kept for three years and destroyed in June 2016.

Participant Initials_____

APPROVED   EXPIRES

APR 3 0 2013   APR 2 9 2014

Approved by the   Approved by the
Rutgers IRB   Rutgers IRB

Attachment 4

Please note that we will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. The audio recordings will be stored on Mr. Giarrizzo's home computer hard drive in password-protected files. These sound files will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. In transcripts of these recordings, your name will not be used. Any documents you sign, where you can be identified by name will be maintained in a locked drawer in Mr. Giarrizzo's home office.

Your name and any identifying information will be changed in any write-up of the study's results. The study write-up will not state that the study took place at your place of employment.

Although, I will make every effort to maintain your confidentiality, there is a risk that your participation in this study will become know to others as the interviews are not scheduled to be held in a secure location. It is my expressed hope that your confidentiality will be maintained through this research project. I will remind you and the other participants in this study at the beginning and end of each meeting about the importance of maintaining confidentiality.

Confidentiality will only be breached if you report an incidence of child abuse. In the event that this instance occurs, the incident must be reported to your School District staff and/or necessary state authorities. This may lead to your termination as a participant in this study.

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. Your will be asked to talk about your particular experiences at your place of employment and your perceptions and/or experiences as they relate to the students in your place of employment. You do not have to participate in this study unless you choose to do so. If you feel uncomfortable during any part of an interview you could leave or skip a question. The decision to participate or not to participate will have no effect upon your professional evaluation or conditions of employment. You may also choose to terminate your participation in this study at any time.

I will ask you questions about your experiences and/or perceptions of the experiences of various types of students. These experiences may be negative or unpleasant, and you may feel uncomfortable, sad, embarrassed, or angry. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, you may ask to skip a question. You may also choose to stop an interview at any time. You may also ask that the audio recorder be turned off at any time during the interview.

You have been told that the benefits associated with participating in this research project include identifying the policies, practices, and strategies that exist within your place of employment that contribute to conditions of social justice for the students who attend your school. The results of this research may be used to inform the practices in other schools to implement policies, practices, and strategies that make schools caring, equal, fair, respectful, and democratic spaces where all children can thrive. Thus, your participation in this study may have a positive and direct benefit to many schools. However, you may receive no direct benefit from taking part in this study. There is no payment associated with participating in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose to participate, and you may withdraw from participating at any time during the study activities without any penalty. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable.

If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, you may contact me at:
   10 Seminary Place
   New Brunswick, NJ 08901
   ███████████████

If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews research studies in order to protect those who participate). Please contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey

Participant Initials_____

APPROVED

APR 3 0 2013

Approved by the
Rutgers IRB

EXPIRES

APR 2 9 2014

Approved by the
Rutgers IRB

Attachment 4

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 848-932-0150
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

Sign below if you agree to participate in this research study:

Participant (Print): _____

Participant's Signature: _____   Date: _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____   Date: _____

AUDIO/VIDEOTAPE ADDENDUM TO CONSENT FORM

You have already agreed to participate in a research study entitled: entitled: Social Justice in Public Schools conducted by Peter Giarrizzo. We are asking for your permission to allow me to audiotape (sound), you as part of that research study. You do not have to agree to be recorded in order to participate in the main part of the study.

The recording(s) will be used for the sole purpose of analysis by the researcher.

The recording(s) will include your name, and may include your age, gender, ethnicity, subject that you teach, and the years of experience you have as a professional staff member in your current place of employment.

The recordings will be stored on Mr. Giarrizzo's home computer hard drive in password-protected files. These sound files will be destroyed at the conclusion of the study. In transcripts of these recordings, your name will not be used. Any documents you sign, where you can be identified by name will be maintained in a separate locked drawer in Mr. Giarrizzo's home office. A document linking a code to the participant's identity with other identifying information will be maintained in a separate locked file cabinet. All study data will be kept for three years and destroyed in June 2016.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record you as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recording(s) for any other reason than that/those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Participant (Print): _____

Participant's Signature: _____   Date: _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____   Date: _____

APPROVED

APR 3 0 2013

Approved by the
Rutgers IRB

EXPIRES

APR 2 9 2014

Approved by the
Rutgers IRB

Participant Initials_____

APPENDIX C

IRB Approval Forms

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
ASB III, 3 Rutgers Plaza, Cook Campus
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

April 16, 2014

P.I. Name: Giarrizzo
Protocol #: 13-654Mx

Peter Giarrizzo

███████████

Dear Peter Giarrizzo:

(Initial / Amendment / Continuation / Continuation w/ Amendment)

Protocol Title: "Social Justice in Public Schools"

This is to advise you that the above-referenced study has been presented to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, and the following action was taken subject to the conditions and explanations provided below:

Approval Date: 4/3/2014 **Expiration Date:** 4/2/2015 **Expedited Category(s):** 8c
Approved # of Subject(s): 25 **Currently Enrolled:** 18

This approval is based on the assumption that the materials you submitted to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) contain a complete and accurate description of the ways in which human subjects are involved in your research. The following conditions apply:

- **This Approval**-The research will be conducted according to the most recent version of the protocol that was submitted. **This approval is valid ONLY for the dates listed above;**
- **Reporting**-ORSP must be immediately informed of any injuries to subjects that occur and/or problems that arise, in the course of your research;
- **Modifications**-Any proposed changes MUST be submitted to the IRB as an amendment for review and approval prior to implementation;
- **Consent Form(s)**-Each person who signs a consent document will be given a copy of that document, if you are using such documents in your research. The Principal Investigator must retain all signed documents for at least three years after the conclusion of the research;
- **Continuing Review**-You should receive a courtesy e-mail renewal notice for a Request for Continuing Review before the expiration of this project's approval. However, it is your responsibility to ensure that an application for continuing review has been submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to the expiration date to extend the approval period;

Additional Notes: - Continuation Expedited Approval per 45 CFR 46.110.
- **IRB Approval has been provided for data analysis only. PI is to contact the IRB prior to the recruitment of additional subjects or further interactions/interventions with subjects.**

Failure to comply with these conditions will result in withdrawal of this approval.
Please note that the IRB has the authority to observe, or have a third party observe, the consent process or the research itself. The Federal-wide Assurance (FWA) number for the Rutgers University IRB is FWA00003913; this number may be requested on funding applications or by collaborators.

Respectfully yours,

Acting For,
Dr. Beverly Tepper, Ph.D.
Professor
Chair, Rutgers University Institutional Review Board
(MW: lb)

cc: Dr. Catherine A. Lugg

WITH LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
ASB III, 3 Rutgers Plaza, Cook Campus
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

May 21, 2013   **P.I. Name:** Giarrizzo
                                                                               Protocol #: 13-654M

Peter Giarrizzo

████████████████

Dear Peter Giarrizzo:

√

(Initial / Amendment / Continuation / Continuation w/ Amendment)

Protocol Title: "Social Justice in Public Schools"

This is to advise you that the above-referenced study has been presented to the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, and the following action was taken subject to the conditions and explanations provided below:

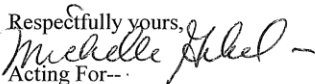|			
Approval Date:	4/30/2013	**Expiration Date:**	4/29/2014
Expedited Category(s):	6, 7	**Approved # of Subject(s):**	25

This approval is based on the assumption that the materials you submitted to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) contain a complete and accurate description of the ways in which human subjects are involved in your research. The following conditions apply:

- **This Approval**-The research will be conducted according to the most recent version of the protocol that was submitted. **This approval is valid ONLY for the dates listed above;**
- **Reporting**-ORSP must be immediately informed of any injuries to subjects that occur and/or problems that arise, in the course of your research;
- **Modifications**-Any proposed changes MUST be submitted to the IRB as an amendment for review and approval prior to implementation;
- **Consent Form(s)**-Each person who signs a consent document will be given a copy of that document, if you are using such documents in your research. The Principal Investigator must retain all signed documents for at least three years after the conclusion of the research;
- **Continuing Review**-You should receive a courtesy e-mail renewal notice for a Request for Continuing Review before the expiration of this project's approval. However, it is your responsibility to ensure that an application for continuing review has been submitted to the IRB for review and approval prior to the expiration date to extend the approval period;

Additional Notes: **Expedited Approval per 45 CFR 46.110**

Failure to comply with these conditions will result in withdrawal of this approval.
Please note that the IRB has the authority to observe, or have a third party observe, the consent process or the research itself. The Federal-wide Assurance (FWA) number for the Rutgers University IRB is FWA00003913; this number may be requested on funding applications or by collaborators.

Respectfully yours,

Michelle Shkel
Acting For--
Dr. Beverly Tepper, Ph.D.
Professor
Chair, Rutgers University Institutional Review Board

                                                        cc: Dr. Catherine A. Lugg