

Principals Socially Just Leadership Practices

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to compare principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices with their teachers' perceptions of the socially just leadership practices their principals used in their schools. The theoretical framework that guided this study of principals socially just leadership practices was Critical Race Theory applied to education, a subset of Critical Race Theory (CRT). Data were collected using two researcher constructed surveys, one for the principals and a companion survey for the teachers, to compare principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices with their teachers' perceptions of the socially just leadership practices their principals used in their schools. The findings revealed a discrepancy between principals' and teachers' perceptions. Principals' perceptions of the socially just leadership practices they enacted in school was significantly higher than teachers' overall perceptions of the socially just leadership practices their principals used in schools.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The American educational system has integrated the essence of a myriad of rich cultures into its foundation. Over the decades, people from many different cultures migrated to the United States from all around the world looking for freedom, employment, and especially, a chance for education (Chin & Trimble, 2015; Garcia, 2011; Howard, 2010; Ornstein & Levine, 2004). In the past 20 years, the greatest modern increase in school population has come in the form of increases in ethnic minorities. For example, in 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau reported the population of the United States to be about 309 millions of which 16.3% were Hispanic, having risen 43 percent between 2000 and 2010, and 12.6% were African-American, having risen 12 percent between 2000 and 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). With respect to the school population, the U.S. Department of Education (2005) reported that 42% of public school students in 2003 were racial or ethnic minorities, a 22% increase from 1972. In 2015, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) reported that 50.7% of the student population was racial or ethnic minorities (NCES, 2016). This increasingly diverse school population has challenged principals, teachers and educational institutions to make certain all students are being provided an equal education.

While the American educational system has become more diverse, the educational outcomes across student populations have not been uniformly positive. Indeed, it is notable that Hispanics and African Americans consistently lag significantly behind their white classmates in achievement (Amos, 2011; Garcia, 2011; Howard, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999). African Americans and Hispanics

trail behind their white peers by an average of more than 20 test-score points on math and reading assessments from 4th to 8th grades, which is a difference of two grade levels (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2011). Moreover, their chances of dropping out of school are three times greater than that for white students, suspension rates for them are twice as high as for whites, and the likelihood of their being in special education classes is twice as great as for whites (Howard, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Teel & Obidah, 2008). Adding to the complexity of the situation, studies have suggested that personal and institutional racism (discrimination), inadequate housing, limited access to healthcare, the likelihood of having unprepared teachers in the schools they attend, and cultural difference between the students and the administrators and teachers guiding their schools, contribute to the achievement gap (Amos, 2011; Davila, 2009; Howard, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Teel & Obidah, 2008). Indeed, Amos (2011) argues there is a cultural gap between the racial, cultural, ethnic, social and linguistic backgrounds of teachers and students (a cultural mismatch), that works to the disadvantage of the students they are pledged to serve which contributes to the continuing achievement gap.

Schools are held responsible for providing all students with an equal opportunity to education. Therefore, one of the many roles of a principal is to ensure that diverse students are provided an equal opportunity to learn (Chin & Trimble; 2015; Davila, 2009; Garcia, 2011; Growe, Perry & Schmersahl, 2002). Moreover, a principal's role is "to lead in breaking down social boundaries and other walls of separation and isolation by building a culture of inclusiveness where all members of the school, teachers, staff,

students, and parents, are valued and grow in getting to know each other” (Reyes & Wagstaff, 2005, p.115).

Researchers have found certain leadership activities contribute to building such a culture. These activities include establishing a clear vision and mission related to such an embracing culture, a focus on school culture, and framing school goals and instructional support for teachers known to be related to learning (Halawah, 2005; Neetles & Herrington, 2007; Supovitz, Sirinides & May, 2010; Theoharis, 2007; Vandenberghe & Staessens, 1991). Through these activities, principals have been found to have an indirect effect on student achievement (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Kose, 2009; Leithwood, Jantzi, Silins, & Dart, 1993; Leithwood, Jantz & Steinbach, 1999; Nettle and Herrington, 2007; Supovitz, Sirinides, May, 2010;).

Socially Just Leadership

Principals have also been found to be successful in raising academic achievement for diverse students through socially just leadership practices (Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Reyes & Wagstaff, 2005; Theoharis, 2008). Principals who practice social justice leadership make issues of “race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision” (Theoharis, 2007, p. 223). Additionally, a socially just leader “interrogates the policies and procedures that shape schools and at the same time perpetuate social inequalities and marginalization due to race, class, gender, and other markers of otherness” (Dantley & Tillman, 2006, p. 19).

Principals who enact socially just leadership practices not only demonstrate common effective leadership traits such as a focus on raising student achievement, improving school structures, recentring and enhancing staff capacity, and strengthening school culture and community, but also are committed to equity and justice (Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Goldberg & Grinberg, 2002; Reyes & Wagstaff, 2005; Theoharis, 2007). In 2007, Theoharis completed an extensive study of principals who enacted socially just leadership. All of them coupled socially just leadership with a “moral obligation” to raise student achievement (p. 232).

Principals who enact socially just leadership also strive to improve school structures to better support diverse students (Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Reyes & Wagstaff, 2005; Theoharis, 2007), for example, changing the structure of schools to eliminate pullout and segregation programs (Theoharis, 2007). Indeed, in the wake of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), researchers have suggested that principals committed to social justice need to “deconstruct some of the system requirements and reconstruct systems where students are not treated as commodities or products, but human beings” (Place, Ballenger, Wasonga, Piveral & Edmonds, 2010, p. 537).

Principals who enact socially just leadership have also been reported to enhance the capacity of the staff to improve student achievement through professional development directed to addressing issues of race, building equity, and developing the staff’s investment in social justice (Place et al., 2010; Theoharis, 2007). Principal leadership in teacher professional development for socially just teaching and learning has

been found to be yet another critical piece if, as leaders, they want to transform their schools (Kose, 2009; Tomlinson & Allan, 2000).

Finally, principals who enact socially just leadership focus on creating a warm and welcoming school environment for all in an attempt to strengthen school culture and community. They do so by building relationships with students and staff and by being visible in the school (Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Kose, 2009; Place et al., 2010; Reyes & Wagstaff, 2005; Theoharis, 2007). Moreover, these principals attempt to build strong relationships with the diverse families of students in the school by inviting them to serve on committees and participate in ethnic forums, parent meetings and other culturally relevant events.

Theoharis (2008), found principals who exemplified social justice leadership transformed schools by refocusing their commitment from not only raising student achievement, but on enacting justice; creating an equal learning environment for all students that helped close the achievement gap (Kose, 2009; Place et al., 2010; Theoharis, 2007). Transformational leaders can inspire followers to “transcend their own self-interests for the good of the group or organization” (Bass, 1985, p. 336), and working through a conceptual framework of transformational leadership can help to alter the achievement gap for diverse students. All of this contributes to building a more socially just environment.

Statement of the Problem

The continuing increase in diverse students in schools is increasing the expectations placed on principals to close the achievement gap between white students

and minority students, specifically African Americans and Hispanics. Numerous studies have shown that principals have an indirect effect on student learning through specific practices (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Kose, 2009; Leithwood, Jantzi, Silins, & Dart, 1993; Leithwood, Jantz & Steinbach, 1999; Nettle and Herrington, 2007; Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2010). Principals who enact socially just leadership practices have been found to improve student achievement (Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Kose, 2009; Place et al., 2010; Reyes & Wagstaff, 2005; Theoharis, 2007) presumably through their effect on teachers. In spite of the research supporting the importance of principals' socially just leadership practices as a factor influencing student achievement, we know little about the relationship between what principals say they do with respect to social justice practices and what the teachers report the principal does in the school. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to compare principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices with their teachers' perceptions of their principals socially just leadership practices.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to compare principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices with their teachers' perceptions of their principals socially just leadership practices. This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1) 1) What are principals' perceptions of the socially just leadership practices they operationalize in their schools overall and by subscales (school structures, professional development, community involvement).

- 2) What are the teachers' perceptions of the socially just leadership practices their principals operationalize in their schools overall and by subscales (school structures, professional development, community involvement).
- 3) How do the teachers' perceptions of their principals socially just leadership practices compare with the principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices in schools overall and by subscales (school structures, professional development, community involvement) .

Significance of the Study

Little is known about the relationship between what principals say they do with respect to social justice practices and what the teachers report the principal does in school. By examining teachers' perceptions of their principals socially just leadership practices, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the current limited knowledge about the issue.

The findings from this study may be useful to principals, district administrators and policy makers. By gaining a greater understanding of the principals' use of socially just leadership practices and what are considered socially just leadership practices, district administrators and policy makers may be able to help principals operationalize practices that will help to close the achievement gap between diverse students in public schools.

Definition of Terms

There were multiple sources of information such as journals, articles, empirical studies and online sources, utilized for this review, therefore it is important to understand

there are several terms that have multiple meanings, some of which are controversial. Additionally, some of the terms have been used interchangeably, but have subtle differences in meaning that are significant in understanding the concepts under discussion. The definitions in this section represent how the terms are used in this study:

1. *Social Justice:* The National Association of Social Workers defines social justice as the view that everyone deserves equal economic, political and social rights and opportunities. Griffiths (1998) further defines that social justice “is the justice that includes the laws but which goes beyond it” (p.179).

2. *Social Justice Leaders:* Theoharis (2007) defined social justice leaders as principals that make an effort to see that “issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States is(sic) central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision” (p. 223). A socially just leader “interrogates the policies and procedures that shape schools and at the same time perpetuate social inequalities and marginalization due to race, class, gender, and other markers of otherness” (Dantley & Tillman, 2006, p. 19).

3. *Socially just leadership practices:* Actions by principals who advocate, lead and keep the issues of race, class and other historically marginalized conditions at the center of their practice and vision.

4. *Academic achievement gap:* According to the US Department of Education, achievement gap is the difference in the performance between each Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) subgroup within a participating Local Educational Agency (LEA) or school and the statewide average performance of the LEA or State's

highest achieving subgroups in reading/language arts and mathematics as measured by the assessments required under the ESEA.

Delimitations

This study will be delimited to principals and Math and Language Arts teachers at middle schools within the same district in a southeastern state that have diverse student populations. By limiting the population to only middle schools, the findings may not speak to the experiences of all schools in this school district, or the state, or region, or to other schools' districts.

Limitations

This study will be limited to self-reported data from principals and teachers to a researcher designed survey. While a field test of the instrument was conducted, questions about the validity and reliability of the instrument used in the study remain, thereby limiting the applicability of the findings. In addition, findings from this study may be limited because some respondents may not be honest in answering the questions. Although the researcher did everything she could to ensure confidentiality in the handling and reporting of the data, teachers may still feel the need to not be fully honest in fear their principals might see the results of the survey.

Organization of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction and rationale for the study, a statement of the problem and purpose, identifies the research questions, describes the significance of the study, defines the terms used in the studies, and provides clarification of the limitations and delimitations of the study. A critical

review of the research and literature related to the study is provided in Chapter 2, as is a description of the theoretical framework guiding the study. Chapter 3 details the methods and procedures used in the conduct of the study. The findings of the study are presented in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 provides a summary of the study and findings, discusses the findings in relation to the literature detailed in Chapter 2 and in terms of the meanings and implications of the findings, draws conclusions from those findings, and offers recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to compare principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices with their teachers' perceptions of their principals socially just leadership practices. After describing the search process for relevant research and literature, leadership practices that have been found to impact student achievement is critically reviewed. Then, the research and literature related to leading for social justice and social just leadership practices are discussed. The literature review concludes with a discussion of the conceptual framework, Critical Race Theory applied to education, that serves as the lens for the study.

The Search Process

The literature review was compiled through a search of multiple electronic sources. The majority of these electronic sources were accessed through the University of Tennessee's online library under the topic Education. The lists of electronic sources searched were Education Week, Education Source, ERIC, Google Scholar, Sage, the US Census Bureau and the US Department of Education Site. Search items included *effective leadership practices, socially just leaders, socially just leadership practices, principals impact on student achievement, socially just leadership impact on student achievement, socially just leaders impact on teachers, socially just leadership traits, socially just leadership resistance and barriers, principals impact on teachers and transformational leadership*. The search process included a consistent focus on literature related to this study. Reviewing the abstracts of studies aided in focusing the review of literature on studies relevant to the current study. The majority of the research found was qualitative,

but some quantitative, mixed method, research syntheses and online articles were included in this review.

Leadership Practices that Impact Student Achievement

With the increase of diversity in schools, principals are being held accountable for how teachers teach and how much students learn. Schools that make a difference in students' learning are led by principals who make a significant and measurable contribution to the effectiveness of staff and to the learning of students in their building (Andrews & Soder, 1987; Bosert, Dwyer, Rowan & Lee, 1982; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Murphy & Hallinger, 1992). Major findings from research on leadership claim certain leadership practices have significant effects on student learning, second only to the effects of quality of curriculum and teacher instruction (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Jacobson, 2011; Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood, 2005; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Furthermore, specific principal leadership strategies have been found to indirectly impact student achievement in schools (Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Leithwood, Leithwood & Day, 2007; May & Supovitz, 2011; Supovitz, Sirinides & May, 2010; Witziers, Bosker & Kruger, 2003).

The research on leadership practices that impact student achievement has evolved since 1985 and continues to emerge. Hallinger and Heck (1998), reviewed 43 studies to examine the body of empirical research on principal effects conducted between 1980 and 1995. The purpose of the review was to understand what had been learned about principals' leadership practices that made a difference in school effectiveness. There were

three criteria that guided the selection of the studies for the review: studies that had been designed to examine the principal's beliefs and leadership behavior, studies that included an explicit measure of school performance such as student achievement data, and studies with international perspectives on school improvement by examining the impact of principals in a variety of countries.

In their review, Hallinger and Heck (1998) found four consistent areas through which leadership practices may influence schools. First, one of the most consistent findings among the studies was principals' who communicated and focused on the purposes and goals of the school had an indirect influence on school outcomes. An example from the review by Goldring and Pasternik (1994) found that the principal's role in creating school goals, establishing a clear mission and gaining staff consensus were stronger predictors of school outcomes than other instructional activities. In similar studies from the review, Leithwood (1994) and Heck (1993) supported the key role principals play in identifying and clarifying the meaning of the school's vision, and both studies reinforced the importance of the impact of coordinating the school's goals with its curriculum. Next, findings from the review of studies indicated principals influence on the organizational structure and social networks of the school. According to Leithwood (1994), effective leadership practices indirectly affect the organizational outcomes restructuring activities and teacher-perceived student outcomes. Also, Hallinger and Heck (1998) found that principals' relationships with people within the school community had an effect on school achievement. In another example from the review, Leithwood (1994), found that principals had an indirect impact on students by fostering group goals,

modeling desired behavior for others and providing intellectual stimulation and individualized support for teachers through professional development. In a similar study, Braughton and Riley (1991) found principals who were more directly involved in the classroom supervision and support of teachers with lower instructional skills had a significant indirect effect on the school's achievement. Lastly, Hallinger and Heck (1998) found that principals had an influence on the organizational culture of the school. For example, Heck, Larson and Marcoulides (1990) found when principals' efforts were focused on improving the educational environment of the school (high expectations for students and teachers, increasing morale, communication) there was an indirect impact on school outcomes.

To support the claim reported by Hallinger and Heck (1998) that principals' relationships within the school community had an effect on school achievement, Blasé and Blasé (1999) examined teachers' perspectives on principals' day-to-day instructional leadership practices and the impact of those practices on instruction. Participants from the study included 800 teachers from the southeastern, midwestern and northwestern United States. Data were collected using the survey, Inventory of Strategies Used by Principals to Influence Classroom Teaching (ISUPICT), a questionnaire that allowed teachers to identify and describe characteristics of principals that enhanced or impacted classroom instruction.

Findings from the study indicated that in effective principal-teacher interactions about instruction, processes such as inquiry, reflection, exploration, and experimentation encouraged teachers to build repertoires of flexible alternatives rather than implement

rigid teaching procedures and methods, and the principals in the Blasé and Blasé (1999) study demonstrated effective ways to develop people by talking with teachers to promote reflection and professional growth. An example of talking with teachers to promote reflection included principals from this study implementing strategies such as making suggestions, giving feedback, using inquiry and soliciting advice and giving praise. Likewise, an example of promoting professional growth with teachers included principals implementing strategies such as (a) emphasizing the study of teaching and learning; (b) supporting collaboration efforts among educators; (c) developing coaching relationships among educators; (d) encouraging and supporting redesign of programs; (e) applying the principles of adult learning, growth and development to all phases of staff development; and (f) implementing action research to inform instructional decision making.

Leading researchers on effective leadership practices, were invited to prepare a report to the American Educational Association (AERA) Division A Task Force on Developing Research in Educational Leadership about what was known about effective leadership practices. They identified three broad categories of leadership practices associated with successful (effective) leadership. Similar to the findings identified in Hallinger and Heck's (1998) review of studies that principals who focus on purposes and goals, organizational structure and social network, relationships with people, and organizational culture of the schools have an indirect impact on student outcomes, Leithwood and Riehl (2003).

These categories were setting directions, developing people, and developing the organization. Leithwood and Riel (2003) claimed principals who focused on setting

directions for their schools also implemented leadership actions such as identifying and articulating a vision, creating shared meanings, setting high performance expectations, fostering the acceptance of group goals and monitoring organizational performance and communication. They also found that principals who focused on developing people by offering intellectual stimulation, providing individualized support and an appropriate model for staff and others to follow impacted student achievement. Lastly, they found that principals who developed their organizations by strengthening school culture, modifying organizational structures, building collaborative processes, and managing the environment also impacted student achievement outcomes.

To further investigate the findings of Hallinger and Heck (1998) and Leithwood and Riehl's (2003) reviews, Witziers, Bosker and Kruger (2003) examined to what extent principals directly affected student outcomes through a meta-analysis of studies conducted between 1986 and 1996. The purpose of the study was to estimate the effect size of educational leadership on student achievement among multinational research reports. Data were collected from 37 studies. Additional data were collected from the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) on reading literacy in 25 countries (Poslethwaite & Ross, 1993). More importantly, the criteria for categorizing the principals' behaviors included defining and communicating a mission, supervising and evaluating the curriculum, monitoring student progress, coordinating and managing curriculum, visibly promoting school improvement, and professional development and achievement orientation.

Witziers et al., (2003) found that school leadership did have a positive and

significant effect on student achievement. As for specific leadership behaviors, Witziers et al., found that in general effect sizes were small and some leadership behavior outcomes such as defining and communicating missions, conducting activities to improve and develop schools, visibility and positive relationships had a significant influence on students. Findings indicated that secondary school leaders had less opportunity to directly affect student outcomes than primary school leaders. Witziers et al., concluded their review by adding that although effect size was small and that different school cultures had different student outcomes, there were certain leadership behaviors that have a significant and positive effect on student achievement. These behaviors included: defining and communicating a mission, supervising and evaluating the curriculum, monitoring student progress, coordinating and managing curriculum, visibility, promoting social improvement and professional development, and having an achievement orientation.

Drawing from the wide range of research on successful school leadership, the consensus is that there are specific leadership practices that affect and even improve student learning (Jacobson, 2011; Leithwood, 2005; Leithwood & Day, 2007; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008; May & Supovitz, 2011; May & Supovitz, 2011; Supovitz, Sirinides & May, 2010; Witziers, Bosker & Kruger, 2003). Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008) summarized the findings from literature in the form of seven strong claims which are the results of previous school-leadership research. The first claim was that school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on student learning. As mentioned earlier, Hallinger and Heck (1998) reported

from their reviews of studies between 1980 and 1998 that the combined direct and indirect effects of school leadership and student outcome were small but educationally significant. The second claim was that almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices: building vision and setting directions, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the teaching and learning program. The third claim was that the ways in which leaders apply these leadership practices, not the practices themselves, that demonstrates responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they work. For example, in turnaround schools principals are encouraged to react with a sense of urgency to failing students or achievement gaps. The fourth claim was that school leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions. The fifth claim was that school leadership has a greater influence on schools and pupils when it is widely distributed. Leithwood et al. (2008) found that there is an indirect effect of leadership on student learning and achievement through directly affecting staff performance. The sixth claim of successful school leadership suggests some patterns of distributions are more effective than others. For example, findings indicated there were relationships between student achievement and the use of different patterns of leadership. Lastly, the seventh claim of successful school leadership is that a small handful of personal traits explained a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness. Moreover, effective leaders have traits such as being open minded, flexible, persistent, resilient and optimistic.

Drawing upon Leithwood and Riehl's (2003) claim that effective principals set

directions and develop people and organizations, Jacobson, Brooks, Giles, Johnson and Ylimaki (2007) examined the beliefs and practices of principals in three urban elementary schools in the State of New York. The principals were selected based on reports of improved student achievement scores during the principals' tenure. Data were collected from interviews with the principals and teachers and from two focus groups with parents and students. As identified in Leithwood and Riehl's (2003) report to AERA Division A Task Force, the principals in the Jacobson et al. study (2007) set directions and developed people and the organization. For example, most of the principals in the study set a clear purpose for the school that "all children had the right to learn and it was their teachers' duty to teach them" (p. 299). Moreover, the principals created a safe, inviting environment by being visible during the day, especially at arrival and dismissal time to greet students, parents and other community members. Related to Leithwood and Riehl's (2003) report on principals developing people and the organization, Jacobson et al. , found principals used all available resources for professional development and in-service training; encouraged experimentation in the classroom; and persisted in creating a nurturing, safe environment for children.

In a more recent study, Supovitz, Sirinides and May (2010), examined the effects of principal leadership and peer teacher influences on teacher instructional practices and student learning by analyzing both Math and English Language Arts student achievement in grades 1 to 8 in one midsize urban southwestern school in the United States.

Participants in the study were from 52 schools (30 elementary, 10 middle, 8 high and 4 specialty schools). The final sample size included 38 elementary and middle schools and

721 teachers. Data were collected from teacher surveys and student records (demographic data, end-of-year standardized test scores). Additional data were collected from the 2005-2006 year pretest scores and compared to the 2006-2007 posttest scores to calculate students' gain scores.

Related to the findings from Leithewood and Riehl's (2003) report on principals developing people and the organization, Supovitz et al.'s (2010) findings indicated principal leadership was a positive and significant predictor of teachers' changes in instruction for both ELA and Math. The leadership practices of principals in this study focused on instruction, fostered community and trust, and clearly communicated the school's mission and goals. Teachers reported these practices as influencing changes to their instructional practice. Supovitz et al., found that the largest and most significant relationship in this study was the effect of principal leadership on teacher to teacher influence. Findings indicated the effect of principal leadership on instruction was largely consistent in ELA and Math models, although change in instruction was not a significant predictor of student math learning. For this particular study, the findings revealed the indirect effects of principal leadership on teacher to teacher influenced the change in ELA instruction and student learning. Supovitz et al., suggested that "principal leadership is significantly related to student learning through change in instruction" (p. 45). They concluded that the "main impact of principals is not directly on students but on teachers who interact with students directly on a daily basis" (p. 47).

Principals' instructional support for teachers is a leadership practice found to have an indirect impact on student achievement (Braughton & Riley, 1991; Hallinger & Heck,

1998; Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Supovitz, Sirinides & May, 2010). May and Supovitz (2011), examined the scope of principal efforts to improve instruction, that is to say the extent to which principals focused on their instructional work with teachers. Participants were from 51 schools in a southeastern urban school district (30 elementary, 10 middle, 8 high schools and 3 alternative/special education schools). Data were collected from 2005-2007 through teacher surveys and principal daily logs.

Similar to Supovitz, Sirinides and May's (2010) findings that suggested principal leadership is significantly related to student learning through change in instruction, May and Supovitz (2011) found that principals in this particular study spent an average of 8% of their time on instructional leadership activities (3 to 5 hours per week), their instructional activities varied from one principal to another.

Socially Just Leadership

In contrast to the research reported above on leadership practices that impact student achievement in schools (Blasé & Blasé, 1999; Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008; Leithwood & Day, 2007; May & Supovitz, 2011), there is a smaller amount of research on principals that have been successful in improving academic achievement for diverse students through socially just leadership practices (Dantley & Tillman, 2006; DeMatthews & MaWhinney, 2014; DeMatthews, Edwards & Rincones, 2016; Jean-Marie, 2008; Kose, 2009; Reyes & Wagstaff, 2005; Theoharis, 2007).

Theoharis (2007) defines socially just leadership "as (the behaviors of) principals who advocate issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other

historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States, and lead and keep these issues at the center of their practice and vision” (p. 5). Dantley and Tillman (2006), add that a socially just leader “interrogates the policies and procedures that shape schools and at the same time perpetuates social inequalities and marginalization due to race, class, gender, and other markers of otherness” (p.19). Furthermore, social justice leaders are seen as creating change in the ways that people interact in schools by allowing time for differences of opinion, discussion and exploration of differences to take place (Astin & Astin, 2000; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002).

The research on socially just leadership has evolved over the years, in particular since 2004. Theoharis (2007), one of the first researchers to examine the socially just leadership practices of principals, conducted a study of seven principals (2 high schools, 2 middle schools, and 3 elementary schools) who were committed to social justice. The purpose of the study was to examine how principals who advocate for social justice guide their schools to transform the culture, curriculum, pedagogical practices, atmosphere, and school wide priorities to benefit marginalized students. Data were collected by means of individual interviews with each principal, a group meeting with the principals, and a review of documents and field logs. Through questioning, Theoharis (2007) found these principals felt a “moral obligation” to enact social justice to improve their schools and used leadership strategies that focused on raising student achievement, improving school structures, enhancing staff capacity, and strengthening school culture and community. For example, six of the seven principals demonstrated significant improvement in student achievement by not only using state test data, but including local assessments to analyze

student growth. Again similarly, six principals improved the school structure by the elimination of pullouts and segregated programs in order to include special education students into general education classes. Some principals offered advanced classes to enhance the rigor of the curriculum and refocused staff attitudes and perceptions of students to hold higher expectations for student achievement. Moreover, most of the principals went beyond traditional professional development to focus on addressing issues of race and building equity and social justice with the staff. Also, most of the principals sought to strengthening the school's culture and that of the community by creating a warm and welcoming climate. Some principals changed the way that school personnel greeted families and started ethnic family meetings to engage marginalized families in their schools.

In talking about their quest to build socially just schools, Theoharis (2007) found that the principals had faced resistance to the change from within the school, from the immediate community, and from the district. Principals felt resistance from obstructive staff attitudes and beliefs toward marginalized students, as well as pressure from privileged parental expectations from the community. Some principals discussed teachers not wanting students who struggled academically or with disabilities included in their classrooms because they felt it would be a distraction to the other students. In addition, middle class parents demonstrated resistance by expressing concerns about the inclusion of marginalized students in the classrooms. Principals found that their central administration was generally unsupportive and its failure to provide needed resources required them to cut staff, including assistant principals. Additionally, all of the

principals agreed their preparation programs had not prepared them for leading for social justice work.

As a follow-up to his 2007 study on principals socially just leadership practices, Theoharis (2008) examined the motivation to lead for social justice with the same participants 7 urban principals (2 high school, 2 middle school, and 3 elementary school). Using the same approach as in his 2007 study, he conducted individual interviews, held a group meeting of the principals, and reviewed school documents, and detailed field logs.

Theoharis (2008) found that all of the principals shared a set of common leadership traits central to their social justice work in the sense of having a strong belief that they were right in seeking to operate a socially just school, and humility in recognition of their self-doubts about their ability to accomplish it. Likewise, these principals were highly visible to students, staff and families, always being visible in the hallways, in classrooms, on school grounds and in the community. The principals demonstrated a commitment to the vision of social justice, despite challenges and resistance, by nurturing, empowering and trusting their staff and through shared leadership. Although not a finding, Theoharis (2008), concluded that principals who lead with a combination of these leadership traits are more committed to equitable practices and empower the school staff, students and families to move with them in the direction of a more social just school.

Similar to Theoharis' (2007) findings that principals felt a call to lead for social justice, Jean-Marie (2008) examined how the leadership practices of four female secondary principals (2 African American, 2 White) dealt with challenges of enacting social justice and equity in their schools. This was part of a larger study conducted in

2005 that examined the professional experiences (formal and informal leadership preparation; management practices; issues of diversity, race and gender) of 11 high school principals from six urban and suburban districts in one southwestern state. In this study, Jean-Marie (2008), used data collected from individual interviews with the 4 principals as well as an analysis of school and related demographic data. As in Theoharis' study (2007), the principals in Jean-Marie's study felt a call to lead for social justice in their schools. She found that these principals had preexisting values and conceptions of social justice that enabled them to maintain their commitments despite difficulties and setbacks. Beyond feeling a call to lead for social justice, Jean-Marie found that the principals embraced and celebrated diversity in their schools. Some of the them provided multicultural professional development and frequently visited classrooms and participated with teachers and students in multicultural activities. She also found that some of the principals improved cultural understanding in their school through restructuring school programs such having academic lunchtimes or after-school tutoring to provide more support for students academically.

In more recent research, Carpenter, Bukoski, Berry and Mitchell (2015) examined how assistant principals working in persistently low-achieving (PLA) schools with historically marginalized populations understood their roles as social justice leaders. In this study, 12 participants were selected from six schools in a large urban midwestern school district. Schools selected for the study implemented the Title I School Improvement Grant(SIG) turnaround model. The SIG turnaround model schools had to replace the principal and at least 50% of the staff, as well as introduce new instructional

programs. Data were collected during the turnaround period through individual interviews. As in Jean-Marie's study (2008), the principals in this study who were committed to social justice had personal experiences and conceptions of justice that enabled them to maintain their commitments in spite of difficulties they faced.

Kose (2009), examined the principal's role in professional development for social justice in terms of an existing, empirically based framework, Principals Role in Professional Development (PRPD) for social justice. Three out of 40 principals from a midwestern school district were selected who met the criteria for promoting socially just learning and teaching and had completed prescreening interviews related to their attitudes toward social justice. Data were collected through individual interviews and notes from fieldwork.

Similar to findings in Theoharis' (2007) study that principals go beyond traditional professional development to focus on addressing issues of race, building equity, and social justice with the staff, the principals in Kose's study (2009) enhanced staff capacity by providing ongoing staff development focused on building equity and developing staff investment in social justice. Five roles exhibited by the principals in the study were found to optimize this professional learning: transformative visionary: developing and communicating a transformative vision; a transformative learning leader: fostering teacher development for social justice; a transformative structural leader: creating formal learning teams; a transformative cultural leader: fostering collaborative learning; and a transformative political leader: maximizing external resources and opportunities for professional learning. Particular to this study, Kose (2009) found that transformative

learning leaders fostered teacher development for social justice. This was accomplished through promoting social identity development, as well as promoting organizational learning development for social justice by encouraging teachers to consider how race/ethnicity influenced their lives through racial autobiographies which generated discussion about understanding the relationships between teachers' and students' racial identities. Beyond practices of transformative learning leaders, Kose found principals directed professional learning toward socially just organizational learning such as the development of school-wide policies, practices, structures, and assessments that promoted continuous organizational and collaborative learning as opposed to isolated professional learning, which supported socially just student learning and teaching.

Regardless of the wide range of definitions of social justice leadership, one area of consensus is that social justice leadership involves the recognition of the unequal circumstances of marginalized groups and of the need to foster actions directed toward eliminating these inequalities (Bogotoch, 2002; Dantley & Tillman, 2006, 2010; Furman, 2012). According to DeMatthews and Mawhinny (2014), "inclusion starts with school leadership and is associated with a social justice awareness of issues of marginalization" (p. 852). Related to the findings in Theoharis' study (2007), principals improve school structures by eliminating pullout and segregated programs in order to include special education students in general education classes. DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2014) examined the challenges two principals in one urban school district faced while attempting to transform their school cultures to embrace a special education inclusion model. Their study was a secondary analysis from an earlier study (DeMatthews &

Mawhinny 2012) study of five principals that made progress in implementing inclusion at their schools. Using the same criteria, the two principals identified for this study met the following criteria: (a) demonstrated a commitment to implementing inclusion at a school wide level; (b) had previous teaching experience with students with disabilities; (c) demonstrated a heightened sense of awareness related to the marginalization of students with disabilities; and (d) worked in a high-poverty urban school with a history of segregating students with disabilities. For this particular study, data were collected through interviews, classroom observations, parent-administrator conferences, grade level team meetings, special education team meetings and community meetings at the school.

DeMatthews and Mawhinney (2014), found the principals demonstrated a commitment to inclusion due to personal values and beliefs that “all students have the right to be in the regular class” (p. 858). The researchers found the principals closely examined their schools’ special education programming to identify and address issues such as poorly written Individual Education Plans (IEP), ineffective instructional practices, student behaviors and discipline. The principals addressed the issues with regular meetings with special education and regular education teachers, providing support with writing IEPs, professional development on differentiated instruction and classroom management, and standardized procedures for dealing with behavior and discipline issues. As with Theoharis’ (2007) findings that principals who enact socially just leadership practices face challenges that slow down the pace of reform, DeMatthews and Mawhinney found the principals faced dilemmas and challenges such as teachers feeling overwhelmed with the increased enrollment of students with IEPs, budget cuts that led to

the elimination of certain programs in order to hire more support for inclusion students, lack of parental support for the inclusion students, and middle class parent resistance to inclusion of students in the classrooms.

Principals are critical to the process of establishing socially just family/community partnerships that can contribute to school improvement and increase equity for students and families (Furman, 2012). DeMatthews, Edwards and Rincones (2016), conducted a case study that examined one principal's enactment of social justice in a private nondenominational Christian elementary school in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, and the out-of-school challenges that affected student achievement.

Data were collected through observations as well as interviews with the principal, teachers, parents and community members. Comparable to findings by Theoharis (2007), the principal in this study sought to strengthen the schools' culture and community involvement by building relationships and creating a warm and welcoming environment for marginalized parents., DeMatthews et al. (2016) found the principal's socially just leadership practices focused on creating a safe, caring, and supportive learning environment, in part by frequently interacting with parents and students throughout the school day. Additionally, they found the principal established meaningful experiences, supports and learning opportunities for students. For example, the principal talked with students while supervising outside, counseled victims of domestic violence, and started an Adult Education program in the community. Lastly, DeMatthews et al., found the principal developed leaders by demonstrating traits of helping parents navigate structures

or access resources and establishing a parent-school culture that emphasized respect, helpfulness and collaboration across families in the community.

Theoretical Framework

Merriam (2009) defined a theoretical framework as the “underlying structure, scaffolding or frame of one’s study” (p. 66). The theoretical framework that guided this study of principals’ socially just leadership practices was Critical Race Theory applied to education, a subset of Critical Race Theory (CRT).

The Critical Race Theory (CRT) movement started in the mid 1970s, as a number of lawyers, activists and legal scholars across the country challenged the ways in which race and racial power were constructed and represented in the U.S. American legal system, in culture and society (Brayboy, 2005; Crenshaw, 1995; Lynn, Yosso, Solorzano & Parker, 2002). Derrick Bell, professor of Law at New York University, is considered the movement’s intellectual father. Additionally, Alan Freeman, Richard Delgado, Kimberle Crenshaw, Angela Harris, Charles Lawrence, Mari Matsuda and Patricia Williams were also early figures of the CRT movement.

The CRT movement is grounded in some of the same issues as the Civil Rights Movement, but looks at them from a broader perspective to include social justice, liberation, economics, history, context, group and self-interest, and economic empowerment (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Tate, 1997). As a theoretical framework, Critical Race Theory examines the “unequal and unjust distribution of power and resources along political, economic, racial and gendered lines” (Taylor, 2009, p.1).

Although CRT began as a movement in law, scholars in a variety of fields, education in particular, were drawn to its tenets. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced CRT to education in an attempt to analyze the inequality in education through a CRT lens. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) argued for a critical race perspective in education based on the following: (a) race remains a significant aspect of U.S. society; (b) U.S. society is based on property rights and not human rights; and (c) the intersectionality of race and property establishes an analytical tool for understanding both social and educational inequity (p. 47). Ladson-Billings and Tate (1997) suggested a race-based analysis in education was important in order to challenge the commonly held beliefs that culture and poverty were the primary reasons that minorities experience educational inequality (McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Similar to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), Taylor (2009) suggested critical race theory' applied to educational theory, because the theory offered "a liberatory pedagogy that encourages inquiry, dialogue, and participation" (p.10).

Critical Race Theory applied to the field of education "challenges the dominant discourse on race and racism as it relates to education by examining how educational theory, policy and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups" (Solórzano, 1998, p. 122). Thus, Solórzano and Yosso (2002) defined Critical Race Theory in education as:

...a framework or set of basic perspectives, methods and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural, cultural, and interpersonal aspects of education that maintain the marginal position and

subordination of (Black and Latino) students. Critical Race Theory asks such questions as: What roles do schools, school processes, and school structures play in the maintenance of racial, ethnic, and gender subordination (pp. 40-44).

There are seven tenets that capture the basic perspectives, research methods, and pedagogy of Critical Race Theory in education. These tenets are discussed below.

Racism is permanent

One of the basic premises of CRT is the notion race and racism is endemic and permanent in society and is a central factor in explaining how individuals experience the law (Russell, 1992). Critical race theorists recognize racism is not a random isolated act, but engrained in U.S. society, influencing political and social aspects of African American's experiences that are largely invisible to most individuals (DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Ford & Airhihenbuwa, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2013; Lynn & Adams, 2002; Taylor, 2009). Furthermore, as cited by DeCuir & Dixon, 2004, the notion of the permanence of racism suggests "that racist hierarchical structures govern all political, economic, and social domains that allocate the privileging of Whites and the subsequent othering of People of color in all arenas, including education" (p. 27).

Counter-storytelling/experiential knowledge

Critical race theorists recognize the experiential knowledge of People of Color as appropriate and critical to understanding, analyzing, and teaching about racial subordination in the field of education. Delgado and Stefanie (2001) defined counter-storytelling as a method of telling a story that "aims to cast doubt on the validity of

accepted premises or myths, especially ones held by the majority” (p. 144). Ladson-Billings (1998) added that the primary reason counterstories are used in critical race theory is that they insert context into the “objectivity” (p. 11) of positivist perspectives. Thus, they recognize the strength of People of Color’s experiences by including such methods as storytelling, family history, biographies, chronicles, narratives (Bell, 1987; DeCuir & Dixon, 2004; Delgado, 1989; Solórzano & Yossi, 2001).

There are three primary forms of storytelling: (a) personal narratives- autobiographical recounting of individual experiences with racism and sexism; (b) other people’s narratives- biographical analysis of another person’s story, specifically in relation to U.S. American institutions; and (c) composite stories- offers both autobiographical and biographical analyses of recounts of racialized, sexualized, and experiences of People of Color (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002).

Interest Convergence

Derrick A. Bell (1980), first presented the theory of interest convergence in an attempt to show how racism could advance the interests of both White elites (materially) and working-class people. Ladson-Billings (2013) and Taylor (2009) also propounded this theory. Interest convergence is when the interests of People of Color in having racial equality “converge” with the interests of those in power (Bell, 1980; Brown & Jackson, 2013; Taylor, 2009). Bell (1980) proposed that *Brown v. Board of Education*, which was considered a great accomplishment for the Civil Rights Movement, may have resulted more from the self-interest of elite Whites than a desire to help Blacks. Although *Brown v. Board of Education* was considered a major gain for society by desegregating schools

to provide an equal education to all students, specifically students of color, Bell (1980) argued:

That losses in terms of human capital by way of the dismissal of scores of African-American teachers and administrators, school closings in Black neighborhoods, and the limited access to high-quality curricula in the form of tracking, inflated admissions criteria, and other factors, have made the so-called “gains” from *Brown* questionable” (p. 28).

Intersectionality

First introduced by Kimberle’ Williams Crenshaw (1991), intersectionality is the term she used to examine how Women of Color experienced oppression based not only on their racial experiences but also through gender and classed experiences. Kafi Kumasi (2011) defined intersectionality as “the belief that individuals often have overlapping interests and traits based not only on their racial identity but also their class position, gender, and so forth” (pp. 216-217). Moreover, it is difficult for individuals in society to understand the concept of intersectionality because “U.S. society is organized along binaries” (Ladson-Billings, 2013, p.10). Critical race theorists are critical of analyses that are based only on race and that do not consider other marginalized and oppressed identities (Crenshaw, 1991; Kumasi, 2011; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). On the other hand, critical race theory is strengthened because of its intersectionality with identities such as class, sexual orientation, or gender (Ladson-Billings, 2013; Yosso, 2005).

Critique of Liberalism

Critical race theorists do not want to use liberalism as a framework for addressing America's racial problems because of liberals' views: the notion of colorblindness, a belief in the neutrality of the law, and a commitment to incremental change (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Looking through those lenses, the perceived goal is that colorblindness and neutrality will allow equality for all (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004). On the other hand, critical race theorists argue "colorblind(ness) ignores the fact that inequity, inopportunity, and oppression are historical artifacts that will not easily be remedied by ignoring race in contemporary society" (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004, p. 29).

Commitment to Social Justice

Critical race theorists in education are committed to the elimination of racism and the establishment of a socially just U.S. society and educational system (Bartlett & Brayboy, 2005; Matsuda, 1991; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015). Social Justice is defined as:

full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure (Lee Anne Bell, 2013, p.13).

Furthermore, critical race theorists committed to social justice in education demand the elimination of racism, sexism, and poverty, and the empowering of subordinated minority groups such as gender, class, national origin and sexual orientation (Matsuda, 1991; McCoy & Rodricks, 2015; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Wing, 1997).

Whiteness as Property

Harris (1993) introduced the concept of Whiteness as property and argued that “due to the history of race and racism in the United States and the role that U. S. jurisprudence has played in reifying conceptions of race, the notion of Whiteness can be considered a property interest (p. 280). Harris (1993) opined that property includes the rights of possession, use, disposition, transfer and exclusion. According to Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) education is considered a property right. An example, is how prosperous White communities resent funding public school districts that serve poor students and Students of Color. Manning (2013), suggested that identifying with Whiteness can provide better paying jobs, better quality neighborhoods and higher quality schools. As for education, curriculum is also considered a form of “Whiteness as property” because historically it has focused on White, Western perspectives (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Patton, McEwen, Rendon, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007).

CRT applied to Education as a Framework

Using CRT in education as a framework is different from other frameworks because it simultaneously tries to make race and racism important in the curriculum, challenge discourse on race, gender and class by showing how it affect the communities of color and help focus on the racialized and gendered experiences of students of color (Solorzano and Ornelas, 2002). In addition, it offers a transformative method when examining racial, gender and class discrimination. Lastly, this framework uses the knowledge and methodological base of ethnic studies, women’s studies, sociology, history, and the law to better understand the vast forms of discrimination (Solorzano and Ornelas, 2002).

CRT in Research

A number of scholars in education consider themselves to be critical race theorists and use CRT to understand educational issues such as inequities in school discipline, the oppressiveness of school structure and hierarchy, tracking that leads to social reproduction, curriculum that ignores or devalues the historical experiences of People of Color, and IQ and achievement testing. Moreover, it is perceived that by pushing the discourse of CRT in education, issues common to all racialized students (Black, Latino, and Native American among others) will become more central (Khalifa, Dunbar, & Douglas, 2013). Love (2004) argues that CRT in education “provides a useful theoretical framework for examination of the current discussion of differences in academic achievement between African-American and white children” (p. 228).

Brown-Jeffey and Cooper (2011), discussed how CRT in education provides not only a lens for understanding, but a tool for analyzing educational practices and structures in education and their effect on People of Color. Likewise, CRT in education promotes social justice by challenging traditional notions of how to conduct, practice, or theoretically engage in educational politics and leadership (Aleman, 2009).

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) suggested using CRT as a tool in education to analyze educational inequality in the curriculum, and specifically, access to a high-quality, rigorous curriculum, which has been enjoyed almost exclusively by White students. In addition, tracking honors, and/or gifted programs and advanced placement courses are but a variety of ways that schools have essentially been re-segregated (Brown-Jeffey & Cooper, 2011; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Increasingly diverse school populations have challenged principals, teachers, and educational institutions to not only provide an equal education to all students but to close the achievement gap between Whites and most Students of Color. CRT in education provides a powerful framework for the conceptualization as well as the conduct of this study. For this study, it influenced how the researcher thought about and framed the study of principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices, as well as their teachers' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices. It also provided a lens through which to make sense of the findings.

Researchers have found that socially justice leadership is about recognizing and understanding the inequities that persist in schools and taking action (Bogotch, 2002; Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Theoharis, 2007). For example, Decuir and Dixson (2004) suggested that a socially just leader recognizes the negative perceptions of people of color within their school and attempts to help the staff change their instructional practices to better serve students of colors by including more stories of triumphs and failures to the curriculum.

CRT in education has been used by researchers as a theoretical framework in a number of studies, (Aleman, 2009; Bogotch, 2002; Brown-Jeffey and Cooper , 2011, Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Delgado and Stefancic 2017; DeMatthews, 2015; DeMatthews, Edwards & Rincones; 2016; Howard , 2008; Khalifa, Dunbar, & Douglas, 2013; Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995; Reyes & Wagstaff, 2005; Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano , 2000; Solorzano & Ornelas, 2002; Reyes & Wagstaff, 2005; Theoharis, 2007), and its wide-use supports the use of CRT in education and as the theoretical framework for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter details the methods and procedures to be followed in the conduct of the study. It includes a discussion of the design of the study and the rationale for the design, the site and population used for the study, the sources of data and data collection procedures, and how the data were analyzed and presented.

In spite of the research supporting the importance of principals' socially just leadership practices as a factor influencing student achievement, we know little about the relationship between what principals say they do with respect to social justice practices and what teachers report the principal does in the school. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to compare principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices with their teachers' perceptions of their principals socially just leadership practices. This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are principals' perceptions of the socially just leadership practices they operationalize in their schools overall and by subscales (school structures, professional development, community involvement).
- 2) What are the teachers' perceptions of the socially just leadership practices their principals operationalize in their schools overall and by subscales (school structures, professional development, community involvement).
- 3) How do the teachers' perceptions of their principals socially just leadership practices compare with the principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices in schools overall and by subscales (school structures, professional development, community involvement).

Research Design

According to Yin (2014), the research design of a study provides the “blueprint” for its conduct. A quantitative approach, survey design, was chosen for the conduct of this study since the purpose of survey research is to “generalize from a sample to a population so that inferences can be made about some characteristics, attitude or behavior of the population” (Creswell, 2014, p.157). Survey design allows for securing answers to the research questions by reaching a number of participants effectively and efficiently, at nearly the same time, without intruding on their privacy. Participants were asked to complete a survey which asked questions which might make them feel vulnerable and/or uncomfortable if stated aloud or associated with them personally. This relates to both parties, the principals and their teachers. Completing a survey allowed them to note their answers in a way that would preserve their privacy, in contrast to such approaches as being interviewed, individually or in a group. Equally important, because the surveys were constructed in the same way for the principals and the teachers, and asked about the same series of socially just leadership practices identified from the literature, a matched survey ensured they would respond to the same questions. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the research design of the study.

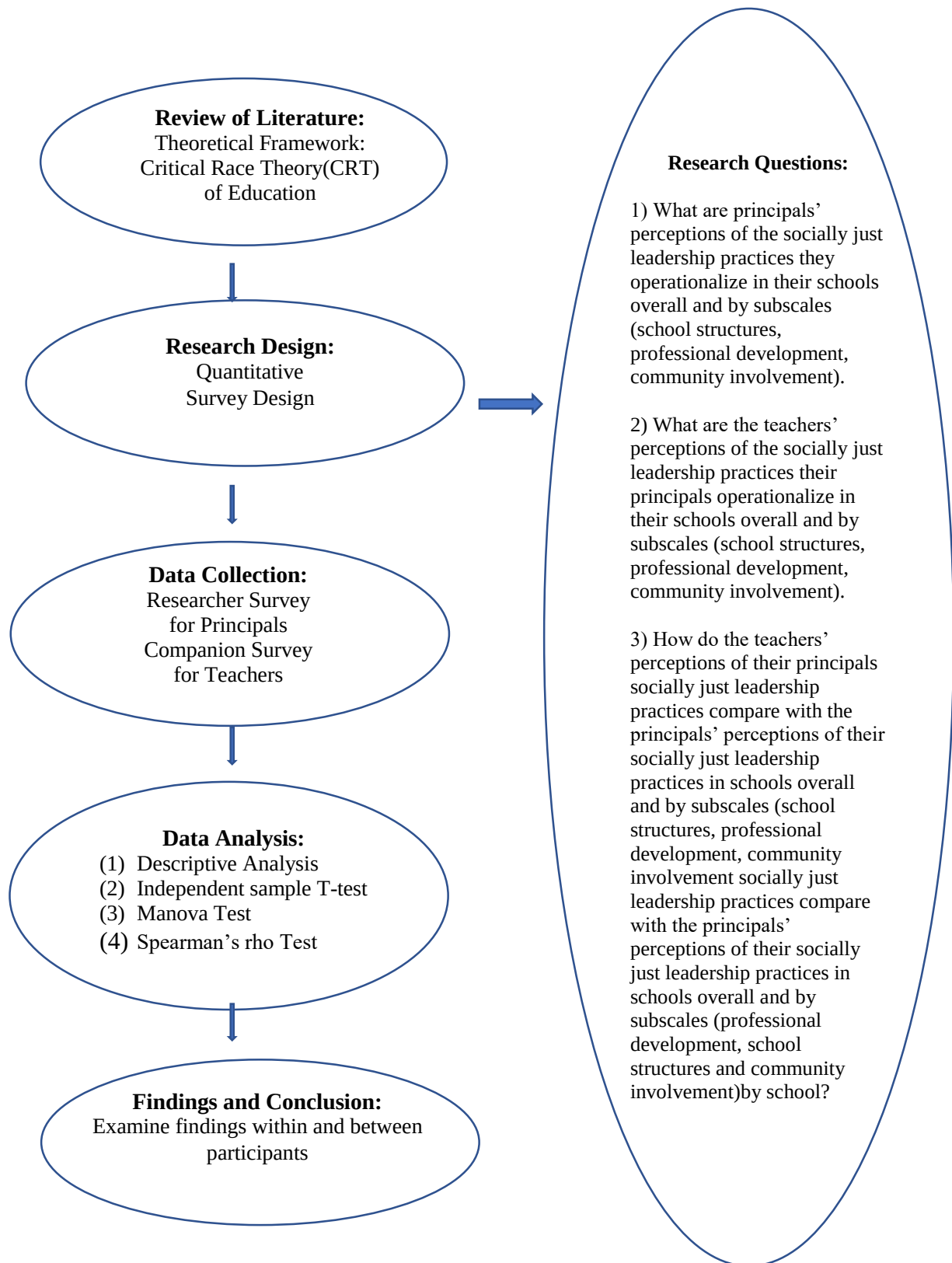


Figure 1: Research Design

Site and Population

The sites selected for the study were middle schools from one multi- school district in a southeastern state hereinafter referred to as Cates County School district to protect its identity. The Cates County School district consists of 50 elementary, 16 middle and 14 high schools serving a widely diverse population of rural, suburban and urban populations. Cates County School district serves more than 60,000 students (Pre-K= 1, 466; Elementary= 27, 517; Middle =13,103; High school =17,190). The racial/ethnic breakdown of students in the school district is 71% Caucasian, 17% African-American, 8.6% Hispanic, 2.7% Asian, 0.49% American Indian and 0.2% Pacific Islander. Along with many other school districts in the state, Cates County Schools experiences a discrepancy in minority-majority achievement.

The data presented in Table 1 shows the differences in the achievement gap between Cates County and the state of Tennessee. The achievement gap for schools was calculated based on their students' performance on state tests. Moreover, the schools' achievement scores were compared with other students' scores in the school district and the state (U. S. Department of Education, 2005).

In light of these discrepancies, the school district rededicated itself to providing an equitable education to all students by implementing an action plan and utilizing resources to help decrease that achievement gap between white and minority students in the district. Cates County School District identified three strategic goals that focused on providing an equal education to all of its students. These goals included increasing student achievement, creating a positive culture in the schools, and, specific to this study,

Table 1*Achievement Gap between Cates County and Other State's District*

Secondary Schools Achievement Gap (Math and Language Arts) between Cates County and Other State's Districts				
Category	Cates County Math Gap	State Average Math Gap	Cates County Reading and Language Arts Gap	State Average Reading and Language Arts Gap
Whites vs Minorities (<i>African-American, Hispanic, Native Americans</i>)	21.90%	15.90%	22.50%	17.10%

eliminating disparities in educational achievement. The Board of Education provided an increase in resources to support these strategic goals. The Superintendent and Cates County School Board indicated its intention to continue to hold all Cates County Schools (principals, teachers and staff) accountable for the revised mission, and to also provide professional development for principals and teachers to learn strategies to help them eliminate disparities. In addition, principals were required to attend professional development sessions which included retreats focused on learning about socially just leadership practices, expert guest speakers from local universities to discuss ways to promote and use socially just leadership practices and to support teachers with instructional strategies to improve student achievement, and a book study of, *Why race and culture matter in schools. Closing the achievement gap in America's classrooms*, by Tyrone C. Howard, a professor and author who advocates for equality in education. In addition, Cates County teachers had to attend a professional development workshop on cultural competence in the classroom and the schools were charged with conducting community forums to get input on how principals could improve disparities in education.

The renewed commitment to equitable education, activities specifically targeting social just leadership and teaching practices, the reality of minority–majority achievement discrepancies, and the critical timeliness of middle school for closing gaps in achievement made the district’s middle schools and the population of principals and content teachers in these middle schools, the most appropriate site and population for the conduct of the study.

Population

Participants for the study were all of the 16 middle school principals and all of the math and language arts teachers (core subjects) from each grade of the three middle school grades in those schools (approximately 18-24 teachers per school). Middle schools in the district include grade levels 6, 7 and 8. Middle schools were chosen instead of elementary or high schools because those are the grades where intervention to prevent dropouts can potentially have the greatest impact. Math and language arts teachers were chosen to be participants since state reports use the achievement scores from those two content areas to measure school achievement gaps, and those are the content areas in which there are the greatest discrepancies. Thus, approximately 274 teachers representing 16 individual schools, plus 16 principals constituted the population for the study.

Sources of Data

Data were collected using two researcher constructed surveys, one for the principals and a companion survey for the teachers, to compare principals’ perceptions of their socially just leadership practices with their teachers’ perceptions of their principals socially just leadership practices. The surveys were designed from socially just leadership practices

identified in the literature. The surveys included 15 items about socially just leadership practices related to (1) school structures; (2) professional development; and (3) community involvement. The principal survey asked principals to identify socially leadership practices they practice; the teacher survey asked teachers to identify the socially just leadership practices their principals practice. (See a copy of these surveys appears in Appendices A and B).

Slightly different demographic data were asked for on each survey. For principals, the data requested included gender, race/ethnicity, age, years of service as a principal and teacher, and years at the school. For teachers, the demographic data requested included gender, race/ ethnicity, age, content area, years of teaching experience, years of working with the principal. A 1-5 Likert type scale was used for responding to the socially just leadership practices to allow for evidencing the extent to which each practice is seen to be operationalized, with 1 = almost never true, 2= seldom true, 3= occasionally true, 4= mostly true, 5 = almost always true. Scores were generated on 3 subscales: school structures (questions 4, 5, 6, 7,15); professional development (questions 3,8,9,10,11) and community involvement (questions 1,2,12,13,14). (See Table 2: Socially Just Leadership Sub Score Scale in Appendix C). Scores on each of the three sub categories can range from 5 to 25. The scores for overall total socially just leadership practices range from 15 to 75. A higher score on the scale represents stronger use of socially just leadership practices, while a score in the lower range indicates weaker use of such practices.

The researcher coded the surveys (principals and teachers) for each school with a letter ranging from A-P in order to aggregate the responses from each school since no

names were asked for on the surveys. The researcher field tested the surveys with 5 students who were currently enrolled in principal preparation programs and 5 teachers who do not currently teach in middle schools. The researcher designed the field test to ensure there was clarity and objectivity in the phrasing of the questions as well as understanding the underlying socially just leadership practices. The edits from the resulted in changing some of the phrasing on the teacher surveys questions for clarity.

Procedures

First, the researcher received approval for the conduct of the study from the school district. To obtain the approval, information was sent to the district describing in detail the following: the purpose of the study, what would be required of the participants (complete survey anonymously; would take about 15 minutes; return to researcher), risks and benefits, that all data would be aggregated for reporting purposes and that neither the district, school or participants will be identified or identifiable; that participation was strictly voluntary, and that return of the survey constituted informed consent. It also provided contact information about the researcher. (See a copy of the application and Cates County approval letter in Appendices D and E. Once permission was obtained, the researcher received IRB approval from the University of Tennessee to conduct the study. (See a copy of the IRB application and the IRB approval letter in Appendices F and G).

Upon receiving IRB approval from the University of Tennessee, the school district provided the names and addresses for the principals and the 274 teachers of the 16 middle schools. The emails were coded by schools so that the principal and teacher responses might be compared. The researcher created one excel file for principals that

included the principals' names, school and email addresses and the school's coded letter (A to P). Next, the researcher created another excel file for teachers that included the teachers' names, school and email addresses and the school's coded letter (A to P).

The researcher sent an email to the principals explaining the study, seeking their participation, and providing a link to the survey. The principals' email included the following information: the purpose of the study, what would be required of the participants (complete survey anonymously; would take about 15 minutes; return to researcher), risks and benefits, that all data would be aggregated for reporting purposes, and that neither the district, school or participants would be identified or identifiable; that participation was strictly voluntary, and that return of the survey would constitute informed consent. In addition, contact information was provided for the researcher. (See a copy of the principals' email in Appendix H).

The researcher sent a similar email to every math and language arts teachers in grades 6-8 in each of the 16 middle schools explaining the study and seeking their participation, along with a link to the survey. In the teachers' email, the researcher explained information about the study that included: the purpose of the study, what would be required of the participants (complete survey anonymously; would take about 15 minutes; return to researcher), risks and benefits, that all data would be aggregated for reporting purposes and that neither the district, school nor participants would be identified or identifiable, that participation was strictly voluntary, and that return of the survey would constitute informed consent. In addition, it provided contact information for the researcher. (See a copy of the teachers' email in Appendix I).

As the surveys were returned the data were aggregated by school for reporting purposes ensuring no schools or participants were identifiable and entered into a secure computer to be used solely for this study. Once the data was downloaded it will be removed from the computer and stored securely in a locked file in the researcher's private office and will be destroyed three years after the successful completion of the dissertation.

The surveys were entered into Qualtrics in terms of the coded school letters to allow for analysis of principal responses and teacher responses, as well as comparing total principal and teacher responses.

Data Analysis

To answer research questions one and two descriptive statistics were generated to include the mean, frequency and standard deviation for the principal's overall socially just leadership practices and by subscales (professional development, school structures and community involvement). The same was done for the teachers' responses.

To answer research question three an independent samples t-test was used to compare the overall mean for teachers' perceptions of their principals socially just leadership practices to see if there was a statistical difference. A Manova was used to test for differences in the subscales (professional development, school structures and community involvement).

Additionally, independent samples t-tests were used to measure the gender and content differences in the overall mean of teacher perceptions of their principals socially just leadership practices they operationalize in their schools. Manova were used to test

gender and content differences in the subscales (professional development, school structures and community involvement). Lastly, Spearman's rho was used to test relationships with the ordinal demographics (age, years of teaching experience and years of experience with current principal) with the overall and subscales.

Researcher Positional Statement

Explaining the researcher's subjectivity involves making biases and assumptions of the researcher clear to the reader (Merriam, 2009). Moreover, since I am deeply committed to socially just leadership in schools I will need to be cognizant of my biases and assumptions as I interpret the findings.

This research topic is very dear to my heart because of my personal experiences with socially just leadership practices. I have not only served as a teacher, but an administrator at schools with diverse students. I have been working in secondary urban settings for the last 20 years and have observed the success of schools that were led by principals who enacted socially just leadership practices. I believe this success came from the principals understanding of their attitudes toward social justice and their 'moral obligation' to provide students with an equal education, which provided a foundation for these principals to support teachers and students in their schools. Furthermore, in this time span, I have also witnessed poor leadership practices from principals in secondary schools who were not aware of the social injustices in their schools. It is from my prior knowledge that I believe principals who operationalize socially just leadership in their schools result in a higher level of student engagement and achievement, a higher retention rate, diverse instructional pedagogies from teachers. and a stronger relationship

with parents and the community, specifically the African-American and Hispanic communities. In my opinion, when a principal operationalizes socially just leadership practices and is purposeful in doing so, he or she is more likely to be able to help close the achievement gap we now see among different racial/ethnic groups.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to compare principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices with their teachers' perceptions of their principals' socially just leadership practices. In addition, this study identified if there was a relationship between what principals say they do with respect to social justice practices and what teachers report the principal does in the school. Further investigation was then conducted to determine if the teachers' years of experience in education, content area (Math, Language Arts) and years of working with the principal made a significant difference in their perceptions of their principals' socially just leadership practices.

The 16-item Principal's Survey of Principals Socially Just Leadership Practices and the companion 16-item Teachers Socially Just Leadership Survey included items related to (1) school structures, (2) professional development, and (3) community involvement. Each item on the surveys was rated by participants on a 5-point Likert scale from "almost never true" to "almost always true". Prior to data analysis, missing values were deleted from the data sets. Therefore, only principal and teacher data consisting of complete responses were used for the analysis.

Participants

Principals

Demographic information from participants were collected from the surveys. Of the 16 principals who were sent surveys, eight of the principals completed the survey, for a 50% return rate. As may be seen in Table 3 below, four of the principals were male and four of the principals were female. Five of the participants were between 36-45 years old,

two of the participants between 46-54 years old, and one participant was over 55 years old.

As for years of teaching, two of the participants had under 10 years of teaching experience, five of the participants had at least 15-19 years of teaching experience, and only one participant had over 20 years of teaching experience. Two of the eight participants had 3-5 years of experience as a principal, five participants had 6-10 years as a principal, and only one participant had over 10 years' experience as a principal. As for years serving as a principal at the school, one of the eight participants had only served as a principal for one year at the school. Four of the eight participants served as principal at their school for two years, two participants served as principal for three years and only one participant had five years' experience as a principal at the same school. None of the participants served more than five years as principal at their school.

Table 3
Participants-Principals

School	Gender	Age	Years Teaching	Years as Principal	Years Principal at school
A	Male	36-45	7	9	2
C	Female	55-older	16	9	5
I	Female	36-45	9	7	3
J	Male	36-45	18	3	1
K	Male	46-54	17	7	2
M	Male	36-45	20	13	3
N	Female	46-54	16	3	2
P	Female	36-45	15	5	2

Teachers

A limited number of teachers replied to the survey despite three attempts by the researcher. Of the 274 teachers who were sent surveys, 22 of the teachers completed the survey, for a 10% return rate. The few numbers who replied may have been influenced by the new filter program from the Cates County district that warned employees to not open emails which were not clearly associated with the school district.

As may be seen in Table 4, eighteen of the teachers were females and four of the teachers were males. One of the participants was between 21-25 years old, three of the participants were between 26-35 years old, ten participants were between 36-45 years old, four of the participants were between 46-54 years old and four participants were over 55 years old. Fourteen of the participants were Math teachers and eight participants were Language Arts teachers.

As for years of teaching, two of the participants had under five years of teaching experience, three of the participants had at least 6-10 years of teaching experience, thirteen of the participants had at least 11-21 years of teaching experience and only four of the participants had over 25 years of teaching experience. As for years with the current principal, eight of the participants worked with their current principal for at least one year, six of the participants had worked with their current principal for two years, three of the participants had worked with their current principal for three years, three of the participants had worked with their current principal for four years, one of the participants had worked with the current principal for five years and only one participant had worked with the current principal for 11 years.

Table 4
Participants-Teachers

School	Gender	Age	Content	Years Teaching	Years With Current Principal
A	Female	21-25	Math	1	1
B	Female	26-35	Math	8	4
C	Female	36-45	Language Arts	18	3
E	Female	36-45	Math	11	5
F	Female	46-54	Math	12	11
G	Female	55-older	Language Arts	34	2
G	Female	46-54	Language Arts	26	3
H	Female	36-45	Language Arts	13	1
J	Female	46-54	Language Arts	21	1
K	Female	46-54	Math	15	1
K	Female	55-older	Math	31	2
K	Male	55-older	Math	20	2
K	Female	36-45	Math	18	2
K	Female	26-35	Math	2.5	0.5
K	Female	36-45	Math	6	2
L	Female	26-35	Math	7	1
M	Male	36-45	Language Arts	12	1
M	Male	36-45	Math	14	1
O	Female	36-45	Language Arts	13	3
O	Male	36-45	Math	15	4
O	Female	36-45	Language Arts	16	2
O	Female	55-older	Math	36	4.5

Results

The three research questions guiding this study were answered by analyzing the collected survey data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

Research Question 1

The first research question asked: What are principals' perceptions of the socially just leadership practices they operationalize in their schools overall and by subscales (school structures, professional development, community involvement). The data presented in Table 5 reveal that the mean score for overall principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices was 4.09 on a scale of 1 to 5, with a standard deviation of .39. This shows that the principals perceived they "almost always" used the socially just leadership practices surveyed in their schools. The second part of the question reveals principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices by subscales (school structures, professional development, community involvement). Descriptive statistics, presented in Table 5, show that the mean score for the school structure was 4.1 with a standard deviation of .40, for professional development was 4.0 with a standard deviation of .52, and for community involvement was 4.0 with a standard deviation of .31. While overall that means principals perceived they 'always mostly' used socially just leadership practices with professional development and community involvement, they identified they were using more socially just leadership practices with school structures and less socially just leadership practices in professional development.

Table 5***Principals' Mean Perception of Socially Just Leadership***

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall	8	3.56	4.69	4.0938	.39245
School Structure	8	3.67	4.67	4.1458	.40274
Professional Development	8	3.40	5.00	4.0750	.52304
Community Involvement	8	3.60	4.40	4.0500	.31623

Research Question 2

The second research question asked: What are the teachers' perceptions of the socially just leadership practices their principals operationalize in their schools overall and by subscales (school structures, professional development, community involvement). The data presented in Table 6 reveal that the mean score for overall teachers' perceptions of their principals socially just leadership practices was 3.4 with a standard deviation of 1.0. This shows that overall, teachers perceive their principals 'occasionally' used socially just leadership practices in their schools. The second part of the question reveals teachers' perceptions of their principals socially just leadership practices by subscales (school structures, professional development, community involvement). Descriptive statistics, presented in Table 6, show that the mean score for school structures was 3.5 with a standard deviation of 1.0, for professional development was a 3.3 with a standard deviation of 1.1, and for community involvement was a 3.5 with a standard deviation of 1.1. While overall that means teachers perceived their principals 'occasionally' used socially just leadership practices in school structures and community, those teachers identified their principals used more socially just leadership practices with school

Table 6*Teachers' Mean Perception of Socially Just Leadership*

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Overall	23	1.25	5.00	3.4918	1.07154
School Structure	23	1.33	5.00	3.5797	1.07528
Professional Development	23	1.00	5.00	3.3087	1.10656
Community Involvement	23	1.40	5.00	3.5652	1.17652

structures and less socially just leadership practice in the planning of professional development.

Research Question 3

The third research question asked: How do the teachers' perceptions of their principals socially just leadership practices compare with the principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices in schools overall and by subscales (school structures, professional development, community involvement). Means of overall perceptions of teachers and principals are presented in Table 7. An independent sample t-test was run to compare the overall mean for teachers' perceptions of their principals socially just leadership practices to see if there was a statistical difference. The results of the t-test were $t=-2.289$, $df=28.786$, $p=.030$ which indicate a significant difference between principals' overall perceptions of their socially just leadership practices and teachers' perceptions of their principals' socially just leadership practices. The overall mean of the teachers' perceptions was 3.49 which was significantly lower than the overall mean of principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices of 4.0.

Table 7*Mean of Overall Perceptions of Teachers and Principals*

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Overall	Teacher	23	3.4918	1.07154	.22343
	Principal	8	4.0938	.39245	.13875

The means of the subscales for teachers and principals are presented in Table 8. A Manova test was run on the subscales (school structures, professional development, community involvement) of teachers' and principals' responses to see if there was a statistical difference. The results of the Manova reveal that there were no significant differences in the mean subscales detected ($F(3,27)=1.294$, $p=.297$, $p > .05$).

As may be seen in Table 9, there were not enough matched responses to be able to compare principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices to their teachers' perceptions of their principals socially just leadership practices by school. Seven of the schools had teachers' responses and no principals' responses, three schools had principals' responses and no teachers' responses and one school had no principal response or teacher response. However, further investigation was conducted to determine how teachers' perceptions differed by gender, content area, experience in education and years of experience working under current principal.

Table 8
Means of Perceptions Subscales of Teachers and Principals

	Case source is DataSet1	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
School Structure	Teacher	3.5797	1.07528	23
	Principal	4.1458	.40274	8
	Total	3.7258	.97425	31
Professional Development	Teacher	3.3087	1.10656	23
	Principal	4.0750	.52304	8
	Total	3.5065	1.03825	31
Community Involvement	Teacher	3.5652	1.17652	23
	Principal	4.0500	.31623	8
	Total	3.6903	1.04159	31

Table 9
Participants-Teachers by School

School	Principal Response	Teachers Response
A	Yes	1
B	No	1
C	Yes	1
D	No	0
E	No	1
F	No	1
G	No	2
H	No	1
I	Yes	0
J	Yes	1
K	Yes	6
L	No	1
M	Yes	2
N	Yes	0
O	No	4
P	Yes	0

Gender

Means for overall teachers' perceptions by gender are presented in Table 10. An independent sample t-test was run to compare the overall mean perception to see if there was a significant gender difference with the teachers' responses. The results of the t-test were $t=-1.537$, $df=21$, $p=.139$ which indicates there was no significant difference in the responses of male and female teachers. The mean for male teachers was 2.76 and the mean for female teachers was 3.64.

Subscale means by gender are presented in Table 11. A Manova test was run on the subscales (school structures, professional development, community involvement) to see if there was a significant gender difference. The results of the Manova reveal that there was no significant difference between genders ($F(3,19)=2.873$, $p=.063$).

Content Area

Means for overall teachers' perceptions by content area are presented in Table 12. An independent sample t-test was run to compare the overall mean of perception to see if there was a statistical difference by content area (Math and Language Arts). The results of the t-test were $t=-.805$, $df=19.478$, $p=.430$ which indicates there was no significant difference by content. The mean for Math teachers was 3.36 and the mean of the Language Arts teachers was 3.68.

Table 10*Means for Overall Teachers' Perceptions by Gender*

	What is your gender?	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Overall	Male	4	2.7656	1.07816	.53908
	Female	19	3.6447	1.03331	.23706

Table 11*Means for Subscales of Teachers' Perceptions by Gender*

	What is your gender?	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Teacher	School Structure	Male	2.6667	.91287 4
		Female	3.7719	1.02471 19
		Total	3.5797	1.07528 23
	Professional Development	Male	2.5000	1.11355 4
		Female	3.4789	1.05545 19
		Total	3.3087	1.10656 23
	Community Involvement	Male	3.1500	1.27932 4
		Female	3.6526	1.17159 19
		Total	3.5652	1.17652 23

Table 12*Means for Overall Teachers' Perception by Content Area*

	Content Area	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Overall	Math	14	3.3661	1.29738	.34674
	Language Arts	9	3.6875	.59293	.19764

Subscale means by content area are presented in Table 13. A Manova test was run on the subscales (school structures, professional development, community involvement)) to see if there was a statistical difference by content area (Math and Language Arts). The results of the Manova reveal that there were no mean differences detected and there is no significant difference ($F(3,19)=.337, p=.799$).

Age

Spearman's rho was run to determine if the teacher's age was related to overall perceptions and subscales. Spearman's rho was used for this data because age is ordinal (ordered categories) and not normally distributed. The results are presented in Table 14 and indicate that there were no significant correlations.

Experience Teaching

Spearman's rho was run to determine if years of teaching experience was related overall perceptions and subscales. Spearman's rho was used for this data because years of teaching experience is ordinal (ordered categories) and not normally distributed. The results are presented in Table 15 and indicate that there were no significant correlations.

Experience Under Current Principal

Spearman's rho was run to determine if years of experience under the current principal was related to teachers' overall perceptions and subscales. Spearman's rho was used for this data because years of experience under current principal is ordinal (ordered categories) and not normally distributed. The results are presented in Table 16 and indicate that there were no significant correlations.

Table 13

Means for Subscales of Teachers' Perceptions by Content Area (Math and Language Arts)

		What is your content area?	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Teacher	School Structure	Math	3.4643	1.29789	14
		Language Arts	3.7593	.61864	9
		Total	3.5797	1.07528	23
	Professional Development	Math	3.1429	1.27564	14
		Language Arts	3.5667	.77460	9
		Total	3.3087	1.10656	23
	Community Involvement	Math	3.4714	1.41336	14
		Language Arts	3.7111	.72188	9
		Total	3.5652	1.17652	23

Table 14

Spearman's rho for overall and subscales with age

		Overall	School Structure	Professional Development	Community Involvement
Age	Spearman's rho	-.289	-.235	-.259	-.246
	p-value	.181	.280	.233	.258
	N	23	23	23	23

Table 15

Spearman's rho for overall and subscales with years of teaching experience

		Overall	School Structure	Professional Development	Community Involvement
Years of teaching experience	Spearman's rho	-.196	-.168	-.159	-.155
	p-value	.370	.443	.468	.479
	N	23	23	23	23

Table 16

Spearman's rho for Overall and Subscales with Years of Experience under Current Principal

		Overall	School Structure	Professional Development	Community Involvement
Years of experience working under current principal	Spearman's rho	-.219	-.138	-.151	-.252
	p-value	.315	.529	.492	.246
	N	23	23	23	23

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY/DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to compare principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices with their teachers' perceptions of their principals' socially just leadership practices. In addition, this study identified if there was a relationship between what principals say they do with respect to social justice practices and what teachers report the principal does in the school. Further investigation was conducted to determine if the teachers' years of experience in education, content area (Math, Language Arts) and years of working with the principal made a significant difference in their perceptions of their principals' socially just leadership practices. This study sought to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are principals' perceptions of the socially just leadership practices they operationalize in their schools overall and by subscales (school structures, professional development, community involvement).
- 2) What are the teachers' perceptions of the socially just leadership practices their principals operationalize in their schools overall and by subscales (school structures, professional development, community involvement).
- 3) How do the teachers' perceptions of their principals socially just leadership practices compare with the principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices in schools overall and by subscales (school structures, professional development, community involvement).

Procedures

Data were collected for the study using two researcher constructed surveys, one for the principals and a companion survey for the teachers to be able to compare their perceptions overall and by subscale (1) school structures; (2) professional development; and (3) community involvement. The researcher sent an email to the principals and a similar email to every Math and Language Arts teacher in grades 6-8 in each of the 16 middle schools. The researcher coded the surveys (principals and teachers) for each school with a letter ranging from A-P in order to aggregate the responses from each school since no names were asked on the surveys.

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics for research questions one and two. An independent sample t-test was used to compare the overall mean for teachers' perceptions of their principals socially just leadership practices to see if there was a statistical difference. A Manova was used to test for differences in the subscales (professional development, school structures and community involvement). Additionally, independent samples t-tests were used to measure the gender and content difference in the overall mean of teacher perceptions of their principals socially just leadership practices they use in schools. A Manova was used to test gender and content differences in the subscales (professional development, school structures and community involvement). Lastly, Spearman's rho was used to test relationships with the ordinal demographics (age, years of teaching experience and years of experience with current principal) with the overall and subscales.

This chapter details the summary of the findings and provides a discussion of the findings in relation to the existing research and literature. It also includes a conclusion and recommendations for future research that would extend and enhance the findings of the study.

Summary of the Findings

Findings for the study include the following

- (1) Overall, principals ‘almost always’ perceive they use socially just leadership practices in their schools and perceive they ‘always mostly’ use socially just leadership practices related to professional development, community involvement and school structures.
- (2) Overall teachers perceive their principals ‘occasionally’ use socially just leadership practices in their schools and ‘occasionally’ use socially just leadership practices related to professional development, community involvement and school structures.
- (3) There is a significant difference between principals’ overall perceptions of their socially just leadership practices and teachers’ overall perceptions of their socially just leadership practices.
- (4) There were no significant differences with the subscales (school structures, professional development, community involvement) between principals’ perceptions of their socially just leadership practices and teachers’ perceptions of their socially just leadership practices in schools.
- (5) There were no significant differences in teachers’ perceptions of principals’ socially just leadership practices in relation to age, gender, content area, years of teaching experience and years with current principal.

Discussion

Although there was a 50% response rate from the principals' who completed surveys for the study, there was only a 10% response rate from teachers. This low response rate from the teachers' surveys limited the applicability of the findings, even with respect to the level of schooling and the system studied. If a larger response had been collected from teachers, the findings for the study might have been different. In addition, since the return rate from teachers was low, it was not possible to compare the principal and teacher perceptions by school, which would have added to the study.

All of the existing research on socially just leadership practices is centered on looking at principals who are known for practicing socially just leadership practices. No such assumption could be made with this study because the researcher had no prior knowledge about whether or not the principals practiced socially just leadership. Therefore, it was not possible to compare the principals overall high ratings of their practices in this study with findings from the existing literature. Similarly, the existing research has not included teachers either or sought to get at their perceptions. In this study, it was possible to compare teachers' perceptions overall, limited as they were, to those of the principals who responded to the study. In so doing, there was a clear discrepancy between them on all dimensions, with teachers rating principals use of socially just leadership practices overall as "occasionally" and principals rating themselves as 'almost always'.

In order to provide an equal education for all students, principals must confidently believe they consistently enact socially just leadership in their schools.

Principals in this study may have scored themselves high on the survey because they felt confident with their level of understanding of socially just leadership practices from trainings provided to them by the district. For example, since it is a strategic goal of the system and there had been several trainings and discussions on the subject area, principals may have thought they knew enough about socially just leadership practices and substituted their perception of knowing with doing in their schools. Looked at in another possible way, principals may not have understood how to implement socially just leadership practices in school, but been unaware of their ability to do so. This lack of understanding may have impacted their perceptions of their level of competency for implementing socially just practices in school.

As for the teachers' perceptions of their principals only implementing socially just practices occasionally, it may be that they did not have sufficient knowledge or understanding of socially just practices to be able to assess whether or not their principals were implementing socially just leadership practices. Compared to the training the principals received in socially just practices, teachers had far less. On the other hand, the teachers' perceptions that the principals only occasionally implemented socially just practices may be a more accurate assessment than that of the principals. They are in the perfect position to observe what principals do day by day, and one of the purposes of such practices is to impact teacher behavior with students.

One might ask, if we did not have the teachers' perceptions of their principals' socially just leadership practices would we believe that the principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices were an accurate representation of their practice?

Logic and research might suggest otherwise when it comes to assessing self-knowledge and the ability to accurately measure one's own behavior. More importantly, although the principals perceive themselves to be enacting socially just leadership practices in the schools, if the teachers do not perceive their principals are enacting socially just leadership practices, the reality is principals are not enacting socially just leadership practices. Perception is reality.

Conclusion

The discrepancy between principals' perceptions of their use of socially just practices and teachers' perceptions of the socially just practices used in schools by their principals suggest that while principals may espouse socially just leadership practices, they do not necessarily practice them; they either lack awareness of their actual practice or they are rationalizing what they do as consistent with socially just practices, if we are to accept the perceptions of the teachers studied. In the absence of a serious intervention it is unlikely that socially just leadership practices will be effectively implemented in the schools.

Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the findings of this study, recommendations for future research studies were considered. Data collection for this study was limited due to a low survey response from teachers. Although half of the principals returned their surveys only 10% of the teachers returned the survey. Therefore, a study that replicates this research in the same system and with the same participants, taking steps to ensure greater participation would help to verify or reject the findings of the current study.

The site selected for the study was middle schools from one multi-school district in a southeastern state with a widely diverse population of rural, suburban, and urban populations. Future research should replicate the study in other school districts, in other geographic regions, and with other levels of schooling.

Given the same findings result from the above studies, an additional recommendation for future studies would be to provide interventions to better support principals with enacting socially just leadership in their schools. These interventions could include coaching and training to help build awareness of the discrepancy between principals' and teachers' perceptions of the socially just leadership practices used in schools.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Socially Just Leadership Practices Survey (Principals)

Demographic Instructions: Please select or complete the best response to the questions below. Just a reminder, completion of this survey is anonymous and voluntary. Return of this online survey will constitute informed consent.

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Please indicate your age group.

- ☐ 21-25
- ☐ 26-35
- ☐ 36-45
- ☐ 46-54
- ☐ 55-older
- ☐

How many years of teaching experience have you had? _____

How many years of experience as a principal do you have? _____

How many years of experience as a principal at this school? _____

Survey Instructions:

Based on your knowledge of your work, please rate how often you exhibit each behavior. Circle the number that represents how often you exhibit this behavior using the following scale.

- **Almost Always True — 5**
- **Mostly True — 4**
- **Occasionally True — 3**
- **Seldom True — 2**
- **Almost Never True — 1**

1	I highlight existing inequalities in ways that inspire and bring together our school community so that we can better serve all students.	5	4	3	2	1
2	I draw upon the unique backgrounds and experiences of our school community to reimagine our school and improve our decision-making processes.	5	4	3	2	1
3	I alter our school's resource allocations to better support high-quality inclusive instruction and the equitable distribution of social, emotional, and academic learning opportunities.	5	4	3	2	1
4	I eliminate pullout/segregated programs to provide more inclusive services to students.	5	4	3	2	1
5	I work to increase academic rigor in all student classes.	5	4	3	2	1
6	I provide access to broader school opportunities for marginalized students.	5	4	3	2	1
7	I increase student learning time.	5	4	3	2	1
8	I collect and analyze data to increase accountability systems on the achievement of all students.	5	4	3	2	1
9	I spend ongoing time with staff discussing and learning about issues of race.	5	4	3	2	1
10	I provide ongoing staff development focused on identifying equity gaps or equity concerns to improve instructional strategies.	5	4	3	2	1
11	I build staff capacity through hiring and supervising staff who share similar beliefs about social justice.	5	4	3	2	1
12	I empower staff by sharing decision-making and developing a culture of trust and professional respect.	5	4	3	2	1

13	I create a warm and welcoming climate by encouraging school personnel to greet and communicate with visitors and other members of the community with respect and graciousness.	5	4	3	2	1
14	I reach out intentionally to the community and marginalized families to build relationships.	5	4	3	2	1
15	I incorporate social responsibility into the school curriculum by involving the community to improve student learning.	5	4	3	2	1
16	I demonstrate a commitment to raising the achievement of marginalized students.	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix B

Socially Just Leadership Practices Survey (Teachers)

Demographic Instructions: Please select or complete the best response to the questions below. Just a reminder, completion of this survey is anonymous and voluntary. Return of this online survey will constitute informed consent.

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Please indicate your age group.

- ☐ 21-25
- ☐ 26-35
- ☐ 36-45
- ☐ 46-54
- ☐ 55-older

What is your content area?

- ☐ Math
- ☐ Language Arts

How many years of teaching experience have you had? _____

How many years of experience working under current principal do you have?

Survey Instructions: Please rate how frequently your principal exhibits the following socially just leadership behaviors. Circle the number that corresponds to how often your principal exhibits each of the behaviors using the following scale. ○ Almost Always True — 5 ○ Mostly True — 4 ○ Occasionally True — 3 ○ Seldom True — 2 ○ Almost Never True — 1						
1	My principal highlights existing inequalities in ways that inspire and bring together our school community so that we can better serve all students.	5	4	3	2	1
2	My principal draws upon the unique backgrounds and experiences of our school community to reimagine our school and improve our decision-making processes.	5	4	3	2	1
3	My principal alters our school's resource allocations to better support high-quality inclusive instruction and the equitable distribution of social, emotional, and academic learning opportunities.	5	4	3	2	1
4	My principal eliminates pullout/segregated programs to provide more inclusive services to students.	5	4	3	2	1
5	My principal works to increase academic rigor in all students classes.	5	4	3	2	1
6	My principal provides access to broader school opportunities for marginalized students.	5	4	3	2	1
7	My principal increases student learning time.	5	4	3	2	1
8	My principal collects and analyze data to increase accountability systems on the achievement of all students.	5	4	3	2	1
9	My principal spends ongoing time with staff discussing and learning about issues of race.	5	4	3	2	1
10	My principal provides ongoing staff development focused on identifying equity gaps or equity concerns to improve instructional strategies.	5	4	3	2	1
11	My principal builds staff capacity through hiring and supervising staff who share similar beliefs about social justice.	5	4	3	2	1

12	My principal empowers staff by sharing decision-making and developing a culture of trust and professional respect.	5	4	3	2	1
13	My principal creates a warm and welcoming climate by encouraging school personnel to greet and communicate with visitors and other members of the community with respect and graciousness.	5	4	3	2	1
14	My principal reaches out intentionally to the community and marginalized families to build relationships.	5	4	3	2	1
15	My principal incorporates social responsibility into the school curriculum by involving the community to improve student learning.	5	4	3	2	1
16	My principal demonstrates a commitment to raising the achievement of marginalized students.	5	4	3	2	1

Appendix C

Table 2

Socially Just Leadership Sub Score Scale

Subscale	Item numbers
School Structures	4, 5, 6, 7, 15
Professional Development	3, 8, 9, 10, 11
Community Involvement	1, 2, 12, 13, 14
Strong Socially Just Leadership Practices	1-15

Appendix D

Permission to conduct research in [REDACTED]

- 1). Charlene Lewis
5818 Wall Flower Lane
Knoxville, TN 37924
Charlene.lewis@knoxschools.org
423-920-8284
- 2). Doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at the
University of Tennessee at Knoxville
Knox County Employee
Northwest Middle School (Assistant Principal)
- 3). Norma D. Mertz
Associate Professor at Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
Department Head of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
- 4). Title of Proposed Study: **Principals Socially Just Leadership Practices**

Brief Description of Proposal

[REDACTED] has been selected for this research study due to the district's commitment to providing an equitable education to all students. The district has implemented an action plan and utilized resources to help decrease the achievement gap between white and minority students. [REDACTED] recently identified three strategic goals that focused on providing an equal education to all of its students. These goals included increasing student achievement, creating a positive culture in the schools, and, specific to this study, eliminating disparities in educational achievement. Moreover, in an effort to support these goals the school district has provided ongoing professional development for principals and teachers, and created a disparities task force to include community involvement to help them eliminate disparities. Therefore, the renewed

commitment to equitable education, activities and specifically targeting social justice leadership and teaching practices, the reality of minority-majority achievement discrepancies, and the critical timeliness of middle school for closing gaps in achievement made [REDACTED] the most appropriate site and population for the conduct of the study.

Purpose of the Study: Dissertation Research

The purpose of the study is to compare principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices with their teachers' perceptions of their principals socially just leadership practices. The targeted population would include all 16 middle schools' principals and middle school teachers (Math and Language Arts, grades 6-8) which is approximately 384 teachers and 16 principals to complete the survey.

Data collection procedures

The researcher will gather data for the study from an online survey with principals and their teachers from 16 middle schools in the district. An email will be sent to all 16 middle schools principals seeking their volunteer participation in the study. Once principals agree to participate in the study, the online Socially Just Leadership Practices survey will be sent to the principals and the companion survey will be sent to their teachers. The survey includes 15 items about socially just leadership practices related to school structures, professional development and community involvement. The principal survey will ask principals to identify socially just leadership practices they practice; the teacher survey will ask teachers to identify the socially just leadership practices their principals practice.

The researcher will use a pseudonym to protect the identity of [REDACTED]. All data collected for the study will remain confidential. Although the schools will be coded by assigned letters to ensure that principals surveys compare to the correct teacher surveys, all responses will remain anonymous. Data will be stored securely and locked in the researcher's office and will be destroyed three years. No reference will be made in oral or written reports linking participants to the study. There are no potential risks for participation in the study.

The approximate timeline for completion of the study is July 2018 to December 2018. The researcher will provide an executive summary to [REDACTED] based on aggregated data. The projected value of the study to [REDACTED] will be to provide information on their progress with their strategic goal of decreasing the achievement gap between white and minority students in the district.

Appendix E

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
July 11, 2018

Ms. Charlene Lewis 5818 Wall Flower Lane Knoxville, TN 37924

Ms. Lewis:

You are granted permission to contact appropriate building-level administrators concerning the conduction of your proposed research study: *Principals Socially Just Leadership Practices* [REDACTED] will provide names and email addresses for principals and teachers in this study. You are granted permission to email recruitment materials for the participants. Final approval of this research study taking place within the [REDACTED] system is contingent upon acceptance by the principal(s) at the site(s) where the study will be conducted. Include a copy of this permission form when seeking approval from the principal(s).

In all research studies, names of individuals, groups, or schools may not appear in the text of the study unless specific permission has been granted through this office. The principal researcher is required to furnish this office with one copy of the completed research document.

Good luck with your study. Contact me at 865-594-1735 if you need further assistance or clarification of the research policies of [REDACTED].



Sincerely,

Laura Denton, Ph.D. Grant Development Manager Research
Committee



Project Number: 181903

Appendix F

December 04, 2018

Charlene Latonya Lewis, UTK - Coll of Education, Hlth, & Human - Education

Re: UTK IRB-18-04767-XP Study Title: Principals Socially Just Leadership Practices

Dear Charlene Latonya Lewis:

The UTK Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed your application for the above referenced project. It determined that your application is eligible for expedited review under 45 CFR 46.110(b)(1), Category 7. The IRB has reviewed these materials and determined that they do comply with proper consideration for the rights and welfare of human subjects and the regulatory requirements for the protection of human subjects.

Therefore, this letter constitutes full approval by the IRB of your application (version 1.2) as submitted, including: Waiver of documentation of informed consent – will see consent cover statement at beginning of online survey Principal's Email/Consent - Version 1.2 Teacher's Email/Consent - Version 1.2

Socially Just Survey-Teachers-CLewis - Version 1.0 Socially Just Leadership Survey-Principals-CLewis - Version 1.0 The above listed documents have been dated and stamped IRB approved. Approval of this study will be valid from 12/04/2018 to 12/03/2019.

In the event that subjects are to be recruited using solicitation materials, such as brochures, posters, web-based advertisements, etc., these materials must receive prior approval of the IRB. Any revisions in the approved application must also be submitted to and approved by the IRB prior to implementation. In addition, you are responsible for reporting any unanticipated serious adverse events or other problems involving risks to subjects or others in the manner required by the local IRB policy.

Finally, re-approval of your project is required by the IRB in accord with the conditions specified above. You may not continue the research study beyond the time or other limits specified unless you obtain prior written approval of the IRB.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board | Office of Research & Engagement
1534 White Avenue Knoxville, TN 37996-1529
865-974-7697 865-974-7400 fax irb.utk.edu

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Flagship Campus of the University of Tennessee System

Colleen P. Gilrane

Colleen P. Gilrane, Ph.D. Chair

Appendix G

Principals Informed Consent/Email

To All Principals:

My name is Charlene Lewis. I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Tennessee in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. As someone who has been in the field of education for over 15 years, I have become interested in learning more about socially just leadership practices. I have recently obtained permission to conduct my doctoral research study in the Knox County school district. I would like to invite you to participate in the study.

The purpose of the study is to compare principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices with their teachers' perceptions of their principals' socially just leadership practices. The targeted population would include all 16 middle school principals and Math and Language Arts teachers (grades 6-8), approximately 384 teachers.

Principals in the study would be asked to complete a 15 item anonymous online survey about the frequency with which they exhibit socially just leadership practices. It will take approximately 20 minutes to complete and return the online survey to the researcher. Your math and language arts teachers will be asked to complete a similar anonymous survey about your socially just leadership practices.

Most research involves some risk to confidentiality and it is possible that someone could find out you were in this study or see your study information, but the investigators believe this risk is unlikely because of the procedures we will use to protect your information. All data collected for the study will remain strictly confidential. Data will be reported so there is no possible or minimal identification of participants. Furthermore, the researcher will not report any such as demographic characteristics that would put principals or teachers at risk of being identified. All data will be aggregated for reporting purposes so that no school, principal or teacher will be identified or identifiable. A pseudonym will be used for the name of the school district. The study records will be stored securely and accessible only to research personnel. An executive summary of the study will be provided to you upon request.

The findings from this study may be useful to principals, district administrators and policy makers. By gaining a greater understanding of the principals' use of socially just leadership practices and what are considered socially just leadership practices, district administrators and policy makers may be able to help principals operationalize practices that will help to close the achievement gap between diverse students in public schools.

Your participation in the study is voluntary. Your decision to participate or not participate in this study, or discontinue/stop your participation will not affect your relationship with your employer in any way. **Please click to continue to the survey if you agree to participate.**

I am very hopeful that you will participate in the study. Your input is invaluable to this research. If you have any questions or would like more information about this project, please contact Charlene Lewis, Principal researcher, **CHARLENE.LEWIS@UTK.EDU** or Dr. Norma Mertz, Faculty advisor, **NMERTZ@UTK.EDU**. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at the University of Tennessee at (865) 974-7697.

Thank you,

Charlene Lewis
Ph.D. Candidate
The University of Tennessee at Knoxville

Appendix H

Teachers Informed Consent

To All Teachers:

My name is Charlene Lewis. I am a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Tennessee in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. As someone who has been in the field of education for over 15 years, I have become interested in learning more about socially just leadership practices. I have recently obtained permission to conduct my doctoral research study in the Knox County school district, and your principal has agreed to participate. I would like to invite you to participate in the study.

The purpose of the study is to compare principals' perceptions of their socially just leadership practices with their teachers' perceptions of their principals' socially just leadership practices. The targeted population would include all 16 middle school principals and Math and Language Arts teachers (grades 6-8), approximately 384 teachers.

Teachers in the study will be asked to complete and return a 15 item anonymous online survey about the frequency with which their principal has exhibited socially just leadership practices to the researcher. It will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Your principal will complete a similar anonymous survey about the socially just leadership practices they operationalize.

Most research involves some risk to confidentiality and it is possible that someone could find out you were in this study or see your study information, but the investigators believe this risk is unlikely because of the procedures we will use to protect your information. All data collected for the study will remain strictly confidential. Data will be reported so there is no possible or minimal identification of participants. Furthermore, the researcher will not report any such as demographic characteristics that would put principals or teachers at risk of being identified. Your responses will not be shared with your principal. All data will be aggregated for reporting purposes so that no school, principal or teacher will be identified or identifiable. A pseudonym will be used for the name of the school district. The study records will be stored securely and accessible only to research personnel. An executive summary of the study will be provided to you upon request.

The findings from this study may be useful to principals, district administrators and policy makers. By gaining a greater understanding of the principals' use of socially just leadership practices and what are considered socially just leadership practices, district administrators and policy makers may be able to help principals operationalize practices that will help to close the achievement gap between diverse students in public schools.

Your participation in the study is voluntary. Your decision to participate or not participate in this study, or discontinue/stop your participation will not affect your relationship with your employer in any way. **Please click to continue to the survey if you agree to participate.**

I am very hopeful that you will participate in the study. Your input is invaluable to this research. If you have any questions or would like more information about this project, please contact Charlene Lewis, Principal researcher, **CHARLENE.LEWIS@UTK.EDU** or Dr. Norma Mertz, Faculty advisor, **NMERTZ@UTK.EDU**. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, you may contact the Office of Research Compliance at the University of Tennessee at (865) 974-7697.

Thank you,

Charlene Lewis
Ph.D. Candidate
The University of Tennessee at Knoxville

VITA

Charlene Latonya Lewis was born in Knoxville, TN to the parents of Charles and Delores Callier. She graduated from Austin-East High School. Following high school, Charlene attended Middle Tennessee State University and graduated in 2002 with a Bachelor of Science in Communications. She furthered her education and earned a Master's degree in Secondary Education: English from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. She was hired by Hamilton County Schools as an English teacher. She also earned a Master's degree in Principal Licensure from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga before moving to Knox County Schools to work as a Master Teacher and is currently serving as an administrator. In August 2019, Charlene completed her doctorate with a Ph.D. in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.