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Black Educational Leaders' Social Justice Educational Practices and Experiences Within Demographically Changing Inner-Ring Suburban School Contexts

Abstract

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of the requirements for the degree
Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by

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St. John Fisher College

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the Lord, Jesus Christ, who keeps me and guides me in my path.

I was given loving parents, Albert Bibbs, Jr. and Laura Frances Hyatte Bibbs. My love of people stems from my ancestral family and my extended families – the Green and Forrest families of Piffard, New York. Without such genuine love and guidance, I would be lost. Without my “diamond walking,” my supportive husband, Jose Rodriguez, I would be unable to move forward professionally. To my in-laws, I give thanks for deeper acceptance and awareness of others. For our son, Armando, I give thanks for you growing into a productive American citizen. For our grandson, Armando, I give thanks for his smile and intelligence as he moves into a bright and productive future. Most of all, I give thanks to Christ who gave me salvation and a directive to “complete the dissertation!”

I was given an excellent wise and knowledgeable Chair, Dr. Jeannine Dingus-Eason, and a quiet, brilliant, tenderhearted committee member, Dr. Ruth Harris. Of course, I must include my Godly, spirit-filled editor and friend, Dr. Corrine Houser, and my “bestest friends,” Dr. Isabell Jones and Dr. Miriam Miranda Jurado.

Last, but not least, I must acknowledge my aunt, Jessie Hyatte Taylor, who constantly encouraged and pushed me to excel in any and all educational endeavors, much in the ways others, like my Aunt Dorothy Irvin Bibbs and Aunt Maureen McKinney Hyatte, accomplished.

Without my God where would I be?

“I will bless the Lord at all times. His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in Him, the humble shall hear and be glad. Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.” Psalm 34:1-4

Biographical Sketch

Anna Bibbs Rodriguez is currently retired from her positions as an Assistant Principal in the Rochester City School District. Mrs. Bibbs Rodriguez attended the State University of New York at Geneseo from 1968 to 1970 and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1970. She attended Nazareth College from 1981 to 1984 and graduated with a Master of Science degree in 1984. She received her Certificate of Advanced Study in Educational Administration from the State University of New York at Brockport in 1986. She came to St. John Fisher College in the summer of 2010 and began doctoral studies in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. Mrs. Bibbs Rodriguez pursued her research in Black educational leaders' social justice educational practices and experiences within demographically changing inner-ring suburban school contexts under the direction of Dr. Jeannine Dingus-Eason and Dr. Ruth Harris and received the Ed.D. degree in 2018.

Abstract

Leadership practices used by Black educational leaders (BEL) to facilitate academic success for many Black students may also benefit rapidly changing demographic student populations within inner-ring suburban school contexts. Operating from a social justice educational leadership framework emanating from the work of Theoharis, an insider perspective by Black educational leaders was explored within demographically changing inner-ring suburban public-school environments. This qualitative study used a phenomenological inquiry approach to uncover the experiential practices of BEL who lead in a northeastern United States inner-ring suburban school located adjacent to a Western New York metropolitan area. Qualitative data was collected from 10 Black educational leaders via individual interviews, demographic profile sheets, and researcher field notes.

The results of the study indicate ways Black educational leaders demonstrate social justice educational leadership in demographically changing inner-ring suburban school contexts. Three themes emerging from this study included *student advocacy*, *conceptualizing equity – a one size does not fit all*, and *providing accessibility to various educational opportunities and experiences*.

Based on this study's findings, BEL have a unique sense of social justice educational leadership practices and experiences. The majority of study participants came from the ranks of teachers who eventually entered into administrative positions. It is recommended for stakeholders to recruitment from the Black teacher ranks, in an attempt

to garner, locate, and employ potential Black educational leaders who have practices and experiences grounded in social justice educational leadership.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

A comprehensive view of leadership requires in-depth searches of research literature. In general, the complex nature of leadership is often ambiguous and necessitates an understanding of various frameworks, approaches, styles, and circumstances. Various researchers (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Northouse, 2010; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2001; Tillman, 2002, 2004) have offered conceptual guidelines for developing successful leadership. For example, Kouzes and Posner (2007) asserted the importance of the Five Leadership Principles, which include *modeling the way*, *inspiring a shared vision*, *challenging the process*, *enabling others to act*, and *encouraging the heart*. From another leadership perspective, Bolman and Deal (2008) offered the relevancy of reframing organizations. They asserted the need to use four basic frames, or tools, to explore leadership including the *structural*, *human resource*, *political*, and *symbolic* frameworks. Bolman and Deal's frameworks allow for versatility and clarification, and they can strengthen organizational development. Additionally, Northouse (2010) stressed a nongender-based importance of theories, practices, and specific styles of leadership and considered cultural perspectives of various identity groups. Northouse further indicated the impact of personal influences on leadership practices.

Educational leadership perspectives are also ever evolving. Research literature by several authors has presented qualities, characteristics, frameworks, and various views of educational leaders (Evans, 2007a; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016, 2016; Noddings,

2001, 2012; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2001; Theoharis, 2007; Tillman, 2002; Tyler, 2016). Siddle Walker (2000, 2001) and Tillman (2006) emphasized the importance of leaders who are culturally sensitive when conducting research as it relates to the perspectives of leadership roles, particularly in changing educational locations. Moreover, race, gender, power, visibility, and collaboration emerged as factors to be deliberated when contemplating the dynamics associated with many Black educational leaders (BEL), particularly as they relate to social justice (Delgado & Stanifich, 2001). However, educational leadership perspectives have not fully explored demographic changes and geographical locations on the impact of educational leadership (Evans, 2007a; Wilson, 2009). This research study investigated BEL's social justice educational practices and experiences within rapidly changing inner-ring suburban school (IRSS) contexts.

According to U.S. Census Bureau (2018) designations, individuals who are descendant from Africa and/or who identify themselves as such, are considered African American or Black. BEL, such as building-based school principals, assistant principals, counselors, and lead teachers frequently function as administrators within their respective buildings (Fultz, 2004; Randolph & Sanders, 2011; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2001; Siddle Walker & Byas, 2009; Tillman, 2004). Within their buildings, many BEL oversee teachers, students, and parents in learning the process (Evans, 2007a; Hernandez, Jurakami, & Quijada-Cerecer, 2014; Lomotey, 1987, 1989, 1993; Siddle Walker, 2002, 2013; Theoharis, 2007; Wilson, 2009). Furthermore, BEL are responsible for providing and implementing practices associated with advocacy, equity, and access, according to social justice principles (Horsford, 2014; Ladson Billings, 1995, 2004; Larson & Murtadha, 2003; Rodriguez, Murakami-Ramvalho, & Ruff, 2009; Theoharis, 2007;

Tillman, 2004). This task has been accomplished as many BEL focus on specific leadership skills, relationships, and practices stemming from a social justice perspective (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Lomotey, 1993; Siddle Walker, 2002, 2004; Siddle Walker & Byas, 2009; Theoharis, 2007).

BEL's social justice leadership practices have been documented in educational leadership discourse, but their contributions have mainly been limited to the historical South and urban Northeast United States (Alston, 2012; Gooden, 2005; Horsford, 2011; Lomotey, 1987; Randolph & Sanders, 2011; Siddle Walker, 2000; Tillman, 2002). Furthermore, from a contemporary context, BEL have successfully educated racially marginalized students (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Delpit, 1995, 2006; Gooden, 2005; Ladson Billings, 1995; Siddle Walker, 2013). However, their social justice educational leadership practices have not been fully explored or documented in IRSS contexts (Evans, 2007b; Mabokela & Madsen, 2005; Madsen & Mabokela, 2002, 2014; Wilson, 2009).

Additionally, as populations continue to be reflective of the change within the United States, BEL may provide unique insights into educational research as it relates to social justice educational leadership. For example, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2010) reported the disaggregation of urban, suburban, and rural educational leaders. The report presented information regarding Black, White, and Hispanic educational leaders and their work locations. Work locations included urban, suburban, and rural regions. The data indicate that 21% of BEL, 62% of White educational leaders, and 13.4% of Hispanic educational leaders were employed in urban areas of New York State. Within the 21% of BEL, a breakdown further indicated that

10.9% were placed in elementary levels and 9.8% were placed in secondary levels. Additional data indicate that 10% of BEL, 81.7% of White educational leaders, and 6.9% of Hispanic educational leaders were employed in suburban areas. Data also indicate that 5.1% of BEL, 81.7% of White educational leaders, and 2.1% of Hispanic educational leaders were employed in rural areas.

As suburbs have continued to experience demographic changes, so have the inner-ring suburbs. Various racial and ethnic individuals, as well as immigrants and families with various socioeconomic status (SES) patterns, are relocating to the inner-ring suburbs (Kneebone, 2014; Lucy & Phillips, 2001; Orfield & Puentes, 2002). Many neighborhoods are changing, and they are no longer homogenous, and housing configurations are different (Hanlon, 2008; Leigh & Lee, 2005). IRSSs are also experiencing diversification particularly in student populations (Evans, 2007a; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Wilson, 2009). Addressing the different emerging demographic trends and BEL social justice educational practices concerns for IRSSs are surfacing and may warrant additional examination (Evans, 2007a; Hanlon, 2009; Horsford, 2014; Khalifa et al., 2014; Paris, 2012; Theoharis, 2007; Wilson, 2009).

Black Educational Leadership Practices

BEL have historically worked in segregated schools in the Southern or in Northeastern United States urban schools (Fultz, 2004; Portin, 2000; Siddle Walker, 2002, 2004, 2013; Woods II, 2012). In the South, BEL lived in their local segregated communities, and they were considered a communal asset (Randolph & Sanders, 2011). BEL attended local Black churches, shopped in their neighborhood communities, and provided visible models of success for students and families (Siddle Walker, 2000). BEL

cared for, and about, their students, and they held students accountable to high academic standards (Ladson Billings, 1995; Noddings, 2001). BEL advocated for the improvement of segregated schools and the overall segregated communities (Horsford, 2010, 2011; Siddle Walker & Byas, 2009).

Ultimately, BEL navigated through a segregated system that suppressed equitable and accessible educational needs for Black students (Fultz, 2004; Khalifa et al., 2016; Siddle Walker, 2001; Tillman, 2004). BEL, parents, and local community partners value education and have provided various resources that have ensured Black students obtain a quality academic education (Dingus, 2006a; Horsford, 2010; Siddle Walker, 2013). Yet, with the passing of federal legislation intended to end segregation and to implement integration, political, sociocultural, and economics patterns have changed drastically within the overall structure of segregated Black communities (Fultz, 2004; Horsford, 2010; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2001, 2013; Siddle Walker & Byas, 2009; Tillman, 2004). The loss of employment in the field of education by BEL appears to be monumental. An outcome of litigation resulted in the job losses of 82,000 Black teachers and administrators who had been responsible for educating 2 million Black students in several Southern states (Tillman, 2004). Furthermore, a burgeoning middle class of BEL decreased, as political, economic, and sociocultural practices changed, and communities lost their visible educational champions (Fultz, 2004; Horsford, 2010, 2011; Tillman, 2004). Additionally, demographics changed as did migratory patterns, and populations shifted as many BEL moved to urban areas in the Northeastern USA.

Upon seeking employment in urban schools, BEL often found their credentials were not accepted in Northern schools (Portin, 2000). Furthermore, BEL were often

pigeonholed into the roles as disciplinarians, and they were expected to use their skills and abilities not as instructional leaders but to resolve “social, racial and cultural differences” within the school buildings (Mabokela & Madsen, 2005; Madsen & Mabokela, 2002). Reacting to various social, racial, and cultural differences often resulted in tensions among individuals and diverse cultural groups in various school settings (Mabokela & Madsen, 2005). According to the NCES (2010, 2012), BEL work primarily in urban educational settings and represented 21% in 2010 and 20% in 2012. However, in the same timeframes, according to NCES (2010, 2012). BEL represented 10% in 2010 and 9.2% in 2012 in suburban communities. Although BEL work in suburban educational environments, their numbers are few, and they are generally relegated to non-principal and subordinate leadership positions such as assistant principals (Wilson, 2009). As assistant principals, the BEL share similar responsibilities as principals, yet they are not recognized for their educational leadership perspectives (Evans, 2007a).

Some educational research documents have been successful educational leadership practices, which have led to academic success for many Black students (Fultz, 2004; Siddle Walker, 2001; Siddle Walker & Byas, 2009; Tillman, 2004). For example, interpersonal caring connections used by BEL have proven beneficial for Black students (Ladson Billings, 2004; Lomotey, 1993; Randolph & Sanders, 2011; Siddle Walker, 2002). Students are encouraged to reach high level standards as they strive for their full academic potential. Furthermore, Black educational leaders have required high academic expectations and individual accountability from students’ performance. This successful Black educational leadership practice is frequently referred to as *warm demanding*, which

is frequently used by Black educational leaders (Bondy & Ross, 2008; Irvine, 1998).

These practices are documented in the research as they relate to the experiences of many BEL and their cultural beliefs, values, and customs. For example, communal connections involve and utilize parents as resources (Dingus, 2006b; Paris, 2012; Tillman, 2004; Wilson, 2009).

Furthermore, the documented work of BEL positions them to offer unique insider perspectives into educational leadership practices. BEL may have experienced marginalization in their personal and professional lives (Alston, 2012; Tillman, 2006). This may offer BEL insight into social justice practices because they may have confronted stereotypical beliefs, values, practices, and an overall lack of cultural awareness as it relates to diverse student populations as well as to themselves (Horsford, 2010, 2011; Siddle Walker & Byas, 2009; Tillman, 2002). The lack of equity and access creates an imbalance and marginalizes individuals who are not connected to the dominant sociocultural framework and who have been disregarded due to their race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, disability, or sexual orientation (Alston, 2012; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Evans, 2007b; Horsford, 2010; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003; Tillman, 2002, 2006). BEL's experiences, grounded in social justice educational practices, may position them to act as advocates for marginalized students (Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Siddle Walker, 2013). However, BEL's perspectives have not always been adequately explored in general educational leadership discourse. Thus, the lack of a more comprehensive perspective creates a gap in general educational leadership as it relates to social justice educational practices (Alston, 2012; Horsford, 2010; Theoharis, 2007).

Research literature indicates BEL hail from a perspective of social justice educational leadership (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Theoharis, 2007; Tillman, 2002, 2004). Furthermore, these specific, social justice educational leadership practices used by BEL to facilitate academic success for many Black students may benefit demographically changing student populations (Hilliard, 1992; Irvine 1989; Ladson Billings, 1995, 2004; Siddle Walker & Byas, 2009). BEL who have experienced marginalization both personally and professionally can often empathize with students in similar contexts. For example, some BEL have indicated that their role as instructional leader was questioned and so were their competency levels when they were expected to be disciplinarians (Madsen & Mabokela, 2002, 2014). Additionally, some BEL have confronted their colleagues relating to stereotypical beliefs, values, and pedagogical practices concerning their students and themselves (Siddle Walker, 2013; Tyler, 2016). Other BEL, acting as mediators, have challenged school boards and have worked to advocate for various students (Khalifa et al., 2016). As social justice advocates, BEL have also encouraged communities as they sought to obtain school resources (Gooden, 2005).

BEL frequently consider moral and ethical responsibilities in their roles as effective, dedicated, committed, and caring administrators who build schools and communities (Dingus, 2006a; Fultz, 2004; Gardiner & Tenuto, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2016; Randolph & Sanders, 2011; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003; Siddle Walker & Sneary, 2004; Tillman, 2004). According to seminal researchers in the segregated southern United States, BEL's social justice leadership practices included writing letters to politicians and walking picket lines to protest inequity and lack of access to education because it impacted Black students (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 1997, 2002; Lomotey, 1987,

1989, 1993; Siddle Walker, 2002, 2004). BEL's actions were grounded in their personal and professional responsibilities, obligation, and commitment as educators in a democratic society (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Randolph & Sanders, 2011). From an educational leadership perspective, BEL continued to demonstrate social justice educational leadership through their caring actions such as acting as surrogate parents, counselors, and school cheerleaders. They also occasionally provided financial support for community undertakings and were committed to making instructional changes to help diverse students (Dingus, 2006b; Ryan, 2016; Siddle Walker, 2001, 2014; Siddle Walker & Byas, 2009; Tillman, 2004; Tyler, 2016).

According to the research, BEL have held teachers accountable and have set high expectations for their teachers as they teach using relevant pedagogical practices (Siddle Walker & Byas, 2009). They have worked to improve student learning in a democratic society; they have worked with students before and after school as well as with the students' family members (Randolph & Sanders 2011). BEL interact with the local community and remain visible throughout the community, ensuring that all students learn (Ladson Billing, 1995; Lomotey 1987; Siddle Walker, 2013; Siddle Walker & Byas, 2009). As educational demographics continue to change, educational leaders must modify previous practices and embrace the importance of equitable and accessible practices for all students (Theoharis, 2007; Ryan, 2016). As student demographics in IRSSs continue to change to include student populations often marginalized by race, language, gender, class, and disability, Black educational leaders may be uniquely positioned to offer an insider perspective regarding social justice educational leadership based on both personal and professional experiences (Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003; Wilson, 2009).

Rapidly Changing Educational Demographics

Many suburban school districts face challenges, especially as they relate to changing student populations. Within the last 20 years (since the late 1990s), these areas have experienced rapid change, which has been emerging over several generations (Fry, 2009; Lucy & Phillips, 2001). The changing demographics have impacted communities as well as schools (Alston, 2012; Frey, 2001; Lucy & Phillips, 2001; Mabokela & Madsen, 2005, Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Wiese, 1999, 2004). Some suburban communities no longer comprise families with homogeneous socioeconomic status (SES) patterns. Cultural incongruences, practices, beliefs, and values also differ and impact school staff, parents, students, and administrators (Evans, 2007a; Mabokela & Madsen, 2005; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014). The combination of poverty, income, and education are also impacted by diversity (Frey, 2015; Khalifa et al., 2016; Siddle Walker, 2013; Tyler, 2016; Wilson, 2009).

For example, from 2008-2012, the poverty rate in suburban tracts was 6.3%, and it continues to rise (Kneebone, 2014; Kneebone, & Reeves, 2016). Additionally, the Schools and Staffing Survey for 2007-2009 (NCES, 2009) reported the total student population of 1,200,730, when disaggregated, was: White 84.6%, Hispanic 7.8%, and Black 6.3%. However, more recent information from 2011-2012 (NCES, 2013) noted the racial patterns have changed and indicate that during this timeframe, 54% of the population was White, 23% was Hispanic, 14% was Black, 6% was Asian Pacific, American/Alaskan Native was 1%, and 3% were of composed of two or more races.

Income and poverty levels reported were also disaggregated by racial groups. Median income levels of diverse populations ranged from the highest to the lowest

income levels. Asian income levels were the highest at \$74,297, followed by White income levels of \$60,256, Hispanic income levels of \$42,491 and Black income levels of \$35,398 (DeNavas-Walt, 2014). On the other hand, below poverty levels during the same time period were: Asian 12.0%, White 10.1%, Black 26.2%, and Hispanic 23.6% (DeNavas-Walt, 2014).

According to National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2016), in suburban school districts, Asian students scored higher than White students, followed by Hispanic students, and Black students had the lowest scores in reading and math. Suburban districts are confronted with the need to adjust curricular patterns, implement culturally relevant pedagogical practices, and train professionals to adapt to a more diverse student population (Evans, 2007a; Mabokela & Madsen, 2005). As many suburban schools continue to resist change and maintain the same schools' practices, beliefs, and values, over time, they fail to create an environment conducive to changing diverse demographic patterns (Evans, 2007a; Howard, 2007; Theoharis, 2007; Tillman, 2006).

Inner-ring Suburban School Context

Nomenclature for inner-ring suburbs has included *trolley car suburbs*, *first suburbs*, *first-tier communities*, and *edge cities*. For the purpose of this study, the term *inner-ring suburbs* is used to refer to suburban areas adjacent to large cities, which were built from the 1930s to as late as 1970 (Berube & Frey, 2005; Hanlon, 2008; Lee & Leigh, 2005, 2007; Puentes & Warren, 2006; Wiese, 1999, 2004) (Figure 1.1).

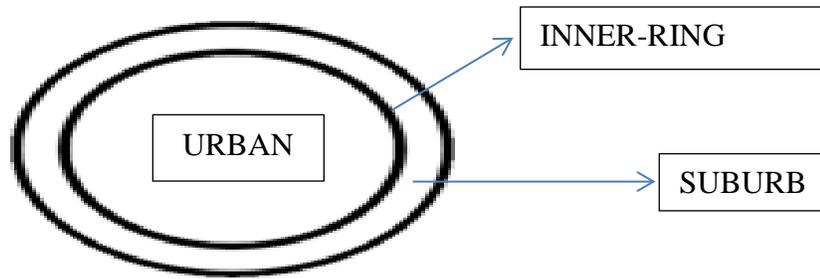


Figure 1.1. Inner-ring Suburbs.

The areas initially developed after World War II (WWII) formed concentric circles around metropolitan areas. Figure 1.1 depicts the specific area of the inner-ring suburbs. These traditional models of suburbia were reminiscent of Levittown, and they were constructed for White residents (Hanlon, 2006; Wiese, 2004; Woods II, 2012). These traditional models of geographically adjoined areas often provided close proximity to large industrial and central cities where many city amenities existed while creating additional opportunities for many White residents to be able to move beyond the city limits (Hall & Lee, 2010; Orfield & Puentes, 2002). Automobile accessibility was a welcomed advantage for many suburban residents, providing transportation, along with mass transportation because major industries relocated or expanded to suburban areas (Orfield & Puentes, 2002). Additional reasons for this eventual movement of residents often included the ability to live in socioeconomic areas with like-minded individuals who were seeking similar cultural neighborhoods and improved public schools (Lucy & Phillips, 2006; Wiese, 2004). As national population trends began to shift, racial and ethnic groups obtained various levels of employment in suburban areas. Socioeconomic patterns, residential neighborhoods, and schools began to experience the impact of the change (Garreau, 1991).

Inner-ring suburbs can be found throughout the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2015), four geographical U.S. areas were designed from a demographic perspective and they include the Northeast, Midwest, South, and West. Although the inner-ring suburbs vary by SES, population, racial, and ethnic background, they are most often defined by some seminal demographers as trolley car suburbs, bedroom suburbs, first suburbs, first ring, or inner-ring suburbs (Hanlon, 2008, 2009; Lee & Leigh, 2005, 2007; Lucy & Phillips, 2000, 2001; Orfield & Puentes, 2002; Puentes & Warren, 2002, 2006). Furthermore, a definitive framework has not been established for inner-ring suburbs. However, they have been defined by specific timeframes, such as pre- and post-WWII construction, which references the age of the populations and age of the housing construction (Lucy & Phillips, 2000; Orfield & Puentes, 2002; Puentes & Warren, 2000).

Additionally, many Midwestern inner-ring suburbs, which were built prior to 1945, often have distinct architectural details and more square footage per home, but they are undervalued because of aging infrastructure, overcrowded schools, and traffic congestion (Orfield & Puentes, 2002). Whereas classic Northeastern inner-ring suburbs, such as homes in Levittown, are considered *cookie cutter homes* with 800 square feet of living space, they also contend with aging real estate, poor schools, and traffic congestion (Leigh & Lee, 2005). Poverty concerns surface as new residents often purchase or rent these outdated homes.

Puentes & Warren (2006) reported changes in racial populations as they relate to White and Black residents in their first ring study of 22 states. Their 2000 data report demonstrated what is referred to as *White Flight*, a mass exit of White residents'

movement out of suburban communities. Beginning in 10-year increments, from 1980, 1990, and 2000, the White population decreased in the inner-ring suburbs by 83.6%, 76.25, and 66.6%, respectively. Additionally, most of the population changes occurred in the top seven inner-ring suburb counties located in the Midwest and in Upstate New York, thus these two regions had 93% of the White population in the overall study. On the other hand, dissimilar statistics were reported in Prince George, MD where a 2.7% Black population growth rate showed an increase faster than the national growth rate. As first ring inner-ring suburbs continue to fluctuate, these regions contend with aging, populations, housing, infrastructures, school facilities, and racial differences.

The research literature suggests that many suburbs are aging, falling into disrepair, and experiencing an overall decline for various reasons (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Hanlon, 2008, 2009; Lucy & Phillips, 2000, 2001). For example, many of the original White homeowners are aging, and younger White inhabitants are not replacing them. Younger White residents often move beyond the inner-ring suburban areas (Frey, 2012). Some aging homes are not equipped with modern advantages and become rental properties (Frey, 2012; Puentes & Warren, 2006). Yet, diverse racial and ethnic families continue to move into these areas as they seek to improve overall lifestyles while maintaining sociocultural and socioeconomic connections (Hanlon, 2006).

Additionally, social stratification of differing racial and income groups, segregation, and integration patterns often frame many inner-ring suburban neighborhoods, creating social differences (Jackson, 1985; Puentes & Warren, 2006). Local governments struggle with decreased economic funding patterns due in part to the lower socioeconomic status of some local residents (Hanlon, 2009; Lee & Leigh, 2005).

Consequently, some suburban districts experience the erosion of tax bases, which decreases funding for basic community infrastructure including public schools (Orfield & Puentes, 2002). As funding patterns often vary in demographically changing school communities, transformation of educational practices must adapt to diverse student populations (Evans, 2007b; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Wilson, 2009). While suburban school leaders continue to overlook the perspectives of marginalized staff, students, parents, and administrators' limited focus is directed to issues of diversity. Thus, the focus on the dominant cultural perspectives continues as educational leaders' practices, beliefs, and values fail to create an environment conducive to the changing demographics (Evans, 2007b; Howard, 2007; Theoharis, 2007; Tillman, 2006).

As of 2012, 9.2% of suburban educational leaders were Black, while in the same year, over 80% of White educational leaders worked in the suburbs (NCES, 2012). The lack of awareness of diverse perspectives and cultural differences within the school culture, relating to overall diversity and acceptance, was limited (Evans, 2007a). For example, a suburban school failed to recognize the importance of Black History activities and terminated this cultural event in the school (Evans, 2007a). Research on suburban schools highlights the inability of these districts to adjust to a changing overall diverse student population (Evans, 2007a; Howard, 2007; Wilson, 2009). Furthermore, administrators often blame students and their families for students not acquiring strong academic skills—even though administrators claim to be diversity oriented (Evans, 2007a; Tyler, 2016). As students with differing sociocultural backgrounds enter suburban schools, many school boards, as well as educational leaders, lack an awareness of the impending cultural diversity. A systemic view of educational leadership practice from a

dominant worldview continues to exclude diverse populations and their respective sociocultural backgrounds (Evans, 2007b; Horsford, 2014; Rigby, 2013; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003; Theoharis, 2007; Tillman, 2004; Tyler, 2016). However, many BEL in suburban districts are overlooked and devalued as potential sources of diversity awareness from a Black educational leadership perspective based on personal and professional experiences.

Theoretical Framework of Social Justice Educational Leadership

For the purpose of this study, a theoretical framework of social justice educational leadership as described by Theoharis (2007), was applied because it addresses educational leaders who seek to dismantle inequitable practices and lack of educational access for historically marginalized individuals. Social justice educational leadership theory considers race, sexual orientation, gender, language, class, and disability as crucial factors of marginalized individuals that need to be equitably addressed. This theory establishes a foundational perspective for educational leaders to design and recreate practices that benefit all students in a larger democratic society. When this theory is applied, the needs of the dominant population decreases and becomes less prominent the needs of marginalized individuals surfaces as an emerging priority. Central to Theoharis's (2007) social justice educational leadership framework is educational leaders' advocacy, practice, and vision within their educational setting. BEL, regardless of their work environment, have argued for equity and access in education (Hilliard, 1992; Riehl, 2000; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003; Siddle Walker & Sneary, 2004; Tillman, 2004). Furthermore, BEL have demonstrated concerns for students and celebrated students' academic accomplishments (Gooden, 2005; Siddle Walker, 2013).

A social justice educational leadership theoretical framework allows for the exploration of educational practices from an insider perspective within a demographically changing IRSS context. Furthermore, it has been documented that some BEL employ specific practices that stress advocacy methods and, subsequently, have enabled students of color to achieve academic success within the segregated South as well as in the urban North (Horsford, 2014; Siddle Walker, 2002, 2004, 2013; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003; Siddle Walker & Byas, 2009; Sanders & Randolph 2011; Tillman, 2004). For example, practices of interpersonal care, respect, recognition, and empathy are factors associated with social justice, and they have been included in the research literature as successful practices of some BEL. Social justice also embraces the potential of varying pedagogical practices as progressive practices to benefit all students. BEL have been placed in underperforming schools and advocated for better school facilities, resources, and equipment for students (Gooden, 2005). BEL often advocate for pedagogical practices that address culturally relevant strategies for marginalized students (Mabokela & Madsen 2014; Tyler, 2016).

Additionally, some Black educational leaders demonstrate commitment, compassion, and confidence in their students' ability to succeed while encountering resistance from colleagues and the school community (Gooden, 2005; Lomotey, 1987). Theoharis (2007) indicated that educational leaders who implement social justice educational practices face resistance from their colleagues, community, and central office personnel, which creates personal discouragement and stress. Lack of support and isolation from professional educators, like-minded peers, with teacher resistance and district office apathy often creates frustration for social justice educational leaders. Yet,

responsible collaboration initiatives enabled the educational leaders cited in Theoharis's (2007) study to raise student achievement levels, improve school structures, refocus and enhance staff capacity, and strengthen their school cultures and communities.

These accomplishments were decisions based on morally accepted attitudes that were enlarged by the social justice orientation of the educational leaders. In summation, there may be a connection between social justice educational leadership practices and insider perspectives of BEL, based on their personal and professional experiences as marginalized individuals.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate BEL's social justice educational leadership practices as they work with marginalized students within demographically changing IRSS contexts. This study sought to disrupt the presumption that suburban school communities, given high student performance measures, are devoid of marginalized populations who may experience inequity and lack of access to educational opportunities because of their race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, disability, or sexual orientation. Failure to include BEL's perspectives regarding educational leadership practices creates a gap in the overall educational leadership discourse. This study will add to the educational research literature regarding social justice educational leadership. The rapidly changing demographic patterns in the United States also reflect the changes in student populations. Social justice educational leadership from a BEL's perspective addresses issues and suggests strategies that would be beneficial for marginalized student populations (Evans, 2007b; Gooden, 2012; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Tyler, 2016; Wilson, 2009).

Research Question

What remains to be investigated is an insider perspective that uniquely positions BEL to be social justice educational leaders in demographically changing IRSS settings (Evans, 2007a; Horsford, 2014; Theoharis, 2007; Wilson, 2009, 2010). This study is guided by one research question:

In what ways do Black educational leaders demonstrate social justice educational leadership in demographically changing inner-ring suburban school contexts in Western New York?

Definition of Terms

The following are key terms and definitions used in this study.

Accessibility – provision for marginalized students within K-16 and beyond educational settings/context to have opportunities to obtain educational experiences for self-improvement, which may have been denied due to marginalization.

Advocacy – a willingness (commitment, passion, readiness, duty, obligation) to boldly interact on the behalf of marginalized students' academic advancement within a K-16 and beyond educational setting within a democratic society.

Black – an individual from a racial or ethnic background who is descendant from African heritage and/or self-identifies as a descendant from African heritage, according to U.S. Census Bureau information.

Black Educational Leaders – African American individuals who operate in the role as an administrator, including school principals, assistant principals, counselors, and lead teachers (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Dingus, 2006a; Horsford, 2011, 2014;

Randolph & Sanders, 2011; Siddle Walker, 2000, 2001, 2014; Siddle Walker & Byas, 2009; Tillman, 2004).

Demographic Shifts – changes in populations within cities, towns, counties, and urban and suburban areas, based on variables designated by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Equity – a skill (talent, expertise, proficiency, know how, ability) to seek and infuse consistently and fairly educational quality and progress for the individual needs of marginalized students throughout K-16 and beyond.

Inner-ring Suburban Community – an adjacent community next to a large metropolitan area or central city. These areas were built between 1930 and 1969, and they were inhabited primarily by White citizens who practiced Eurocentric values and beliefs. These areas developed because of the national government’s decision to support segregated housing and lending practices via bank regulations (Lucy & Phillips, 2000; Wood II, 2012).

Insider Perspective – a theoretical approach employing an emic view to qualitative research that can be based on the researcher’s race, ethnicity, and cultural views of knowledge. The four knowledge-based perspectives are gained from “an indigenous-insider, indigenous-outsider, external-insider, or an external-outsider viewpoint” (Tillman, 2006, p. 268).

Marginalized Individuals – people within an educational environment who are not considered to be connected to the dominant sociocultural framework. They are often underrepresented and historically minimized because of their race, class, gender, language, disability, or sexual orientation (Beauboeuf-Lafontant 2002; Evans, 2007a; Horsford, 2010; Theoharis, 2007; Tillman, 2002, 2006).

Social Justice Educational Leadership – “means that these principals make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership practice and vision. This definition centers on addressing and eliminating marginalization in schools” (Theoharis, 2007, p. 23).

Chapter Summary

A theoretical framework based on social justice educational leadership is used as a lens to examine BEL’s leadership practices from an insider perspective in demographically changing IRSS contexts (Theoharis, 2007; Tillman, 2006; Tyler, 2016). Perspectives of BEL, although often overlooked, are important to examine and identify as they relate to educational leadership practices because they often impact marginalized students (Alston, 2004, 2005; Copper, 2009; Evans, 2007a; Ladson Billings, 1995; Loder, 2005; Tillman, 2006). Research indicates that many successful BEL leaders possess specific educational leadership styles (Gooden, 2005; Horsford, 2010; Lomotey, 1989; Randolph & Sanders, 2011; Siddle Walker, 2002). According to the NCES (2010), BEL remain proportionally underrepresented in the role of educational leaders in most demographic areas. However, many BEL are positioned to offer insider perspectives concerning social justice educational leadership practices as they work in demographically changing IRSS contexts. Perspectives of BEL and their social justice educational leadership practices could potentially augment and transform current and future educational leadership discourse.

This study was organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 discussed the overall research topic. Chapter 2 provides a selected review of pertinent research information

regarding the research topic. Chapter 3 outlines the research design, methodology, and data collection procedures. Chapter 4 provides reports from 10 study participants regarding their work in IRSS contexts, and Chapter 5 outlines the research study's implications, limitations, recommendations, and conclusions.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Chapter 2 presents a selective review of educational leadership research discourse pertaining to Black educational leaders' (BEL) social justice leadership practices. The review of the literature focuses on inner-ring suburban school (IRSS) contexts within demographically changing educational settings. Research indicates many BEL have developed successful practices, which contribute to academic success for many Black students (Siddle Walker, 2001). The experiences of BEL, though often overlooked, dismissed, or ignored, have the potential to provide a broader view of educational practices for all educational leaders. As educational research continues to evolve, it suggests that educational leaders need to keep abreast of successful practices for all students within various locales and communities. However, educational leadership literature often fails to incorporate diverse cultural values, beliefs, and customs, particularly the successful educational leadership practices employed by BEL as they relate to social justice (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Gooden, 2005; 2005; Ladson Billings, 1995; Lomotoy, 1987, 1983; Siddle Walker, 2001; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003; Siddle Walker & Sneary, 2004; Tillman, 2002, 2004).

Furthermore, the voices of many BEL within contemporary settings have not been extensively explored and provide an opportunity for additional exploration. The omission of BEL's successful social justice practices is particularly significant as it affects policy makers, student populations, and educational leaders in rapidly changing demographic settings (Frey, 2015; Siddle Walker & Sneary, 2004; Theoharis, 2007, Tillman, 2004).

Investigating the social justice practices employed by some BEL within an inner-ring suburban school context increases experiential research literature as it relates to educational leadership practices in the 21st century (Evans, 2007a).

Black Educational Leaders

Transformation and change are not always accepted in leadership practice, particularly as they impact diversity within student populations (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Evans, 2007a, 2007b; Horsford, 2010; Siddle Walker & Sneary, 2004; Theoharis, 2007; Tillman, 2002, 2006). Students who are often devalued and marginalized, due to race, class, gender, language, disability, or sexual orientation, are frequently overlooked as the dominant population is considered the norm (Larson & Murtadha, 2003; Theoharis, 2007). Factors, such as a lack of resources, staff attitudes and beliefs, maintaining the status quo, and failure to adapt to differing pedagogical practices, illustrate resisting change (Larson & Murtadha, 2003; Theoharis, 2007; Tillman et al., 2006; Tyler, 2016).

Black educational leaders contend with racial inequities and lack of educational accessibilities, both professionally and personally, yet they have proven to be advocates for some students who are marginalized (Alston, 2004, 2012; Horsford, 2014; Lomotey, 1993, 1989; Randolph & Sanders, 2011; Siddle Walker, 2013). For example, practices of interpersonal care, respect, recognition, and empathy are factors associated with social justice and have been included in the research literature as successful practices of some Black educational leaders (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Bondy & Ross, 2008; Irvine & James, 1998; Siddle Walker, 2002, 2004, 2014; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003; Siddle Walker & Sneary, 2004; Theoharis, 2007).

As a social justice educational leadership practice, BEL also embrace the potential of varying pedagogical practices as progressive practices to benefit all students in a democratic society (Irvine, 1989; Larson & Murtadha, 2003; Randolph & Sanders, 2011; Theoharis, 2007). BEL often request pedagogical practices which address culturally relevant strategies for marginalized students (Hilliard, 1992; Irvine & James, 1998; Mabokela & Madsen 2014; Siddle Walker 2014; Tyler, 2016). An observation made by Gooden (2005) reported BEL have been placed in underperforming schools and have advocated for better school facilities, resources, and equipment for students. Gooden's (2005) observation is applicable in schools undergoing change, particularly as they relate to equity, inclusivity, climate, and pedagogy (Khalifa et al., 2016).

Black educational leaders often establish positive relationships with students because they may share similar marginalized experiences (Grant, 2010; Khalifa et al., 2016; Lomotey, 1989). For example, the seminal research of Lomotey (1993) reported many educational leaders operate as bureaucratic administrators as they oversee school operations. However, Black educational leaders also act as ethno-humanistic educators due in part to their understanding of racism and cultural perspectives (Gooden, 2005; Lomotey, 1993). These dual roles practiced by BEL encourage relationships that are frequently grounded in commitment, compassion, and confidence in students, and they demonstrate interpersonal care, trust, visionary beliefs, and values of student academic success (Lomotey, 1993; Randolph & Sanders, 2011; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003).

Another example of Black educational leaders using social justice leadership is presented in the research of Randolph and Sanders (2011) as they presented their research regarding a BEL named Ethel T. Overby. Stressing the values of citizenship in the United

States democratic society, Ms. Overby evoked social justice practices of advocacy, equity, and access as they relate to marginalized students. After requesting and being denied materials for her classroom library, the BEL obtained books by networking with other educators and the local community. As time passed, Ms. Overby became a principal, which enabled her continual advocacy, which resulted in obtaining a library for the entire community.

As presented in here in Chapter 2, changing demographics impact communities, particularly schools and educational leadership practices (Howard, 2007; Lee & Leigh, 2005, 2007; Tyler, 2016). Issues of diversity, as they relate to marginalized students who are often underrepresented due to race, class, gender, language, disability, or sexual orientation, impact the work of educational leaders (Evans, 2007b). Social justice educational leadership practices are intended to be addressed through advocacy of educational inequities while increasing educational accessibility for often marginalized students (Larson & Murtadha, 2003; Theoharis, 2007). Though Black educational leaders may be few in number, they continue to serve students. Pedagogy, values, beliefs, and leadership practices remain concerns as educational leaders attempt to adjust to diverse populations within an inner-ring suburban school context (Madsen & Mabokela, 2002; Tyler, 2016). Insider knowledge and experiences of Black educational leaders, though frequently challenged, may position them to contribute to a social justice educational leadership perspective (Evans, 2007a, 2007b; Wilson, 2009).

Overview of Social Justice Educational Leadership

Three social justice educational leadership concepts, including advocacy, equity, and accessibility, emerged from the research of Theoharis (2007). Social justice

educational leadership exemplifies the ideology and practices of educational leaders seeking to advocate for educational equity and access in schools with marginalized students. These targeted students are often underrepresented and historically minimized due to their race, class, gender, language, disability, or sexual orientation (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Evans, 2007a, 2007b; Hernandez, Murakami, & Cerecer, 2014; Horsford, 2010; Randolph & Sanders, 2011; Siddle Walker, 2013; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003; Siddle Walker & Sneary, 2004; Theoharis, 2007; Tillman, 2002, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002;). Social justice educational leadership places an emphasis on fairness for marginalized students who are often on the periphery of the dominant sociocultural framework as it relates to educational settings. Consideration of the needs of the dominant student population becomes subsidiary when including the needs of marginalized students who are often overlooked due to their race, class, gender, language, disability, or sexual orientation (Ryan, 2016; Theoharis, 2007, Tillman, 2006; Tyler, 2016). Emphasis is placed on marginalized individuals who are on the periphery of the dominant sociocultural framework. These targeted individuals are often underrepresented and historically minimized due to their race, class, gender, language, disability, or sexual orientation (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Evans, 2007b; Horsford, 2010; Siddle Walker & Sneary, 2004; Theoharis, 2007; Tillman, 2002, 2006).

Schools, often considered a microcosm of society, reflect the values, beliefs, attitudes, and practices of the larger society (Gooden, 2005; Hilliard 1992; Larson & Murtadha, 2003). Educational leaders, teachers, students, parents, and neighboring communities may subscribe to similar practices (Gooden, 2005). On the other hand, as diverse student populations with differing social and intellectual capital enter various

school districts, their background and differing cultural perspectives are frequently dismissed, overlooked, or ignored (Evans, 2007a; Hernandez et al., 2014; Hilliard, 1992; Howard, 2007). When diverse student populations arrive, schools often continue to resist change and often fail to acknowledge opportunities to transform (Howard, 2007).

Educational leaders who utilize social justice educational practices contend with the challenges as they implement and transform schools, particularly schools experiencing changing demographics (Theoharis, 2007). Research conducted by Theoharis (2007) outlines a social justice framework of significance. Theoharis's (2007) study investigated implementation of social justice educational leadership as experienced by a group of principals. Participants were from three Midwestern states and consisted, initially, of 18 individuals; however, seven principals were selected. Each principal self-identified as an educational leader committed to educational advocacy, equity, and access for all students who were marginalized. All principals were employed in urban schools, and they were disaggregated as follows: two in high school, two in middle school, three in elementary school. The demographic breakdown included three females, four males, one gay, six heterosexual; one identified as Asian and six identified as White. Their ages ranged from 30 years into their 50s with 3-16 years of experience. Theoharis (2007) reported that a group such as this is not racially diverse.

After extensive in-depth interviews, field notes, document examination, group meetings, and reflections, the findings were reported (Theoharis, 2007). Three specific overlapping tenets emerged which recognized the importance of advocacy, equity, and accessibility for marginalized students. Each tenet was formed as a research question

focused on specific goals and objectives. The three research questions for the Theoharis (2007) study were:

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

Strategies, issues, and practices were reported in the Theoharis (2007) study to be consistent among the seven principals.

Social justice educational leaders focus on encouraging and enabling others, such as students, teachers, parents, and the community at large, to actively participate in the school environment (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Siddle Walker & Sneary, 2004; Theoharis, 2007). This moral responsibility not only strengthens school and community cultures but raises students' academic achievement levels (Khalifa et al., 2016; Wilson, 2009).

Additionally, by eliminating *pull outs* and increasing curricular rigor, teachers realize the need to adjust their curriculum to benefit all students and minimize educational inequities. A further examination of Theoharis's (2007) collected data identified educational needs for diverse students and an opportunity to embrace all students.

Furthermore, Theoharis reported that professional development emerged as a result of acknowledging professional biases when working with diverse student populations.

Social justice educational leaders also contend with oppositional actions from teachers, parents, and the community at large as well as from the Central Office (Mabokela & Madsen, 2005; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Siddle Walker & Byas, 2004; Theoharis 2007; Tillman, 2004). Staff attitudes and beliefs present challenges to building

collaborative school plans. White middle-class parents and faculty who feel privileged expect the status quo to continue (Evans, 2007b; Mabokela & Madsen, 2005; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Theoharis, 2007; Wilson, 2009). Social justice educational leaders describe limited time to respond adequately to questions regarding school changes (Theoharis, 2007). Inclusion of special education students was also found to be a struggle for the social justice educational leaders (Gay, 2002; Theoharis, 2007). The Central Office administrators in these studies did not provide support—neither did some colleagues, which resulted in feelings of isolation by the social justice educational leaders (Mabokela & Madsen, 2005; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Theoharis, 2007).

As social justice educational leaders continue their work, they develop proactive and coping strategies to sustain the school community and themselves (Theoharis, 2007). Building relationships with like-minded peers and networking while communicating with all constituents enables social justice educational leaders to prioritize activities in and out of the school building (Siddle Walker & Byas, 2009). Thus, the participants of Theoharis's study were more able to find some quality time for themselves such as physical exercise and spending more time with their families. On the other hand, some social justice educational leaders experienced self-destructive behaviors such as abusing the use of alcohol or focusing up to 70 hours per week on school related matters.

In summary, Theoharis (2007) reported good educational leadership should incorporate socially just educational practices especially for all marginalized students. Furthermore, Theoharis posited that administrative preparation programs should also include social justice educational ideologies. Theoharis (2007) further recommended that studies should include a more racially diverse leadership population and be extended into

rural and suburban school districts. Moreover, implementation of social justice educational practices recognizes and disrupts educational practices, which perpetuate educational inequities and lack of educational access for all students. Yet, within a rapidly changing demographic school environment, a sense of fairness and impartiality appears to be a crucial goal in establishing an educational environment for all students (Evans, 2007a; Mabokela & Madsen, 2005; Ryan, 2016; Tyler, 2016; Wilson, 2009). Social justice educational leadership addresses educational inconsistencies which permeate schools attended by marginalized students located in the IRSS context.

Rapidly Changing Educational Demographics

Demographics change for various reasons and impact outcomes in various ways, particularly in communities and schools (Frey, 2015; Hanlon, 2009; Kneebone & Reeves, 2016; Lucy & Phillips, 2001). For example, the U.S. Census Bureau data for 2000-2010 reported changes, which occurred every 10 years during 1960-2000 (Frey, 2015). The U.S. Census Bureau reported that between 1960-1970, the population experienced an increase of 13.3%; between 1970 and 1980, a population decrease of 11.5% occurred; between 1980 and 1990, the decrease in population was reported as 9.8%; but by 2000, the population increased to 13.2%, and 2000-2010, there was a decrease in population of 9.7% (Mackun & Wilson, 2011). This represented a percentage change in the four major regions of the US. Within the Northeast, there was a 3.2% increase; in the South, a 14.3% increase; the Midwest experienced a 3.9% increase; and there was an increase in the West of 13.8% (Frey, 2015). During the same time period, the racial breakdown indicated an increased percentage of Hispanic by 43%, White by 9.2%, Black/African American by 12.3%, and Asian by 43.3% (Frey, 2012).

The U.S. Census Bureau indicated changes in national poverty and household income levels. The news release indicated 43.1 million (13.5%) people lived in poverty during 2015, which represented a rate decrease in poverty of 1.2%. Furthermore, the median household income in 2015 was \$56,516, which was an increase of 5.2% over \$53,718 in 2014 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Regionally, between 2014-2015, increases in household income were reported as follows: in the West, 6.4%; Midwest, 4.9%; and the South and Northeast both increased by 2.9% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016).

Communities and schools are also impacted by national data. For example, a national survey of inner-ring suburbs concluded that socioeconomic status (SES), race, class, and ethnicity remain as contributing factors in many suburban locales (Hanlon, 2009). Additionally, Hanlon identified five inner-ring suburban typologies, which were categorized as vulnerable, ethnic, lower income, old, and mixed. Within each of the categorized inner-ring suburban contexts, specific overlapping traits emerged regarding socioeconomics, stereotypical patterns based on race and ethnicity, and employment opportunities. Hanlon (2009) concluded changing migratory patterns are inevitable, but regardless of the regional populations, race, class, and ethnic patterns appear constant concerns.

When considering rapidly changing demographic patterns, student populations are also impacted by family circumstances. A research study reported by Kneebone and Reeves (2016) stressed the importance of multi-dimensional poverty and specific factors which greatly affect communities and students (Kneebone & Reeves, 2016). The researchers identified five specific disadvantages that impact overall suburban

development. Their report includes data regarding low incomes, lack of skills, unemployment, poor health conditions, and living in distressed areas.

Furthermore, they reported Blacks and Hispanics experience the greatest number of disadvantages within the suburbs; for example, of the total adult suburban population reported, 11.7% of adults have at least two disadvantages. Additional disadvantages were reported as adults living in poverty, 2.5%; lacking high school diplomas, 5.1%; lacking health insurance, 5.7%; and living in a non-working household, 4.8% (Kneebone & Reeves, 2016). The researchers also reported racial/ethnic statistics as: Whites living in poverty, 0.9%; Blacks living in poverty, 4.9%; and Hispanics living in poverty, 7.5%; Whites lacking high school diplomas, 2.6%; Blacks lacking a high school diploma, 5.8%; Hispanics lacking a high school diploma, 14.5%; lacking health insurance: Whites, 3.2%; Black, 7.2%; and Hispanic, 14.6%; and those living in a non-working household: White, 4.2%; Black, 9.1%; and Hispanic, 4.8%.

Kneebone and Reeves (2016) recommended putting local, regional, state, and federal policies into place to address the five disadvantages as they relate to increasing income, job training, medical assistance, and addressing significant educational gaps. The researchers stated that students with diverse student backgrounds present an opportunity for school transformation as it impacts practices of educational leaders (Kneebone & Reeves, 2016).

As migratory patterns continue to change, other demographic paradigms also are affected (Frey, 2015). Research conducted by Frey (2015) examined population shifts which are impacting current and future demographic dynamics. Frey found that in 2011, the number of White children's birthrates was surpassed by minority children's birthrates.

As ethnic populations continue to grow and outnumber White populations, a new category of minority-majority individuals is emerging in the United States. Minority-majority populations are rapidly growing and will influence labor forces which will need to be educated. Frey (2015) and Theoharis (2007) agreed that policymakers, community, and educational leaders need to realize the importance of preparing schools and students for their futures (Frey, 2015; Theoharis, 2007). Frey illustrated how many schools in the South and Southwest are impacted by students who speak a language other than English (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Frey (2015) also reported the demographic shift to suburban areas by minority-majority individuals, and their families have increased. As varying populations increasingly migrate to the suburbs, many marginalized individuals and their families move to inner-ring suburban schools.

Inner-ring Suburban School Context

For the purpose of this study, the term *inner-ring suburban schools* (IRSSs) is used to refer to suburban schools located in communities adjacent to large cities, which were built from the 1930s to as late as 1970 (Berube & Frey, 2005; Hanlon, 2008; Lee & Leigh, 2005, 2007; Puentes & Warren, 2006; Weise, 1999, 2004). The communities initially developed after center cities formed concentric circles around metropolitan areas. These traditionally segregated areas often provided proximity to large industrial and central cities where many city amenities existed while creating additional opportunities for many White residents to be able to move beyond city limits (Hall & Lee, 2010; Weise, 1999, 2004). Additional reasoning for this eventual movement of many White residents often included the ability to live in socioeconomic areas with like-minded

individuals seeking similar cultural neighborhoods, which they believed offered improved public schools (Lucy & Phillips, 2006).

On the other hand, Black suburbs existed and desired similar experiences but were often overlooked (Weise, 1999, 2004). For example, Weise (1999, 2004) reported Blacks built a flourishing suburb, Chagrin Falls Park, in Cleveland, OH after WWII. As Black residents and their extended families came from the South, where segregated living conditions were often inadequate, and from the North, where homeownership represented upward mobility, Chagrin Falls Park functioned with a culturally based kinship ideology. Kinship is explained as adopting individuals who are non-blood related as though they were caring family members. Within Chagrin Falls Park, overall survival was dependent upon the residential community connections. Homes were built by Black families with assistance from neighbors and provided a communal cohesiveness (Wiese, 1999, 2004). Proximity to job locations, city amenities, schools, and similar mindsets also existed in this Black suburb. As governments implemented restrictive land zoning and building policies, much of Chagrin Falls Park, as well as other Black suburbs in the United States, were eliminated (Wiese, 1999, 2004).

As suburban school districts adjust to changes in student and communal populations, various challenges surface. Housing configurations shift and pockets of racial and ethnic communities emerge (Hanlon, 2009; Wiese, 1999, 2004). As socioeconomic patterns change, racial and ethnic populations occupy many previously homogeneous White suburban areas (Frey, 2001, 2015; Lucy & Phillips, 2000, 2001; Tyler, Frankenberg, & Ayscue, 2016). With these changes come differing value systems,

beliefs, and cultural changes, which not only impact communities but also local schools and educational leaders (Alston, 2012).

For example, in a study conducted by Mabokela and Madsen (2005), the researchers investigated inter-group conflict as it related to cultural incongruities experienced by European American and African American administrators. The study centered on two U.S. court-mandated desegregation programs located in suburban school districts. A limitation of the study revealed principals were European American and only assistant principals of color existed in the two districts, yet both administrative duties were comparable (Mabokela & Madsen, 2005). Most of the schools' students, teachers, and administrative populations consisted of European Americans, but the schools were experiencing a growth of diverse students of color (Evans, 2007a; Mabokela & Madsen, 2005; Wilson, 2009).

The reported findings indicate European-American principals operated from a *color-blind* perspective, that is, it was explained as an avoidance of racial realities and implications (Evans, 2007a, 2007b; Mabokela & Madsen, 2005). Furthermore, Mabokela and Madsen (2005) reported the principals abdicated their authority and transferred their authoritative power to African American teachers thus creating a sense of powerlessness for both educators. On the other hand, the African American assistant principals in their study operated from a *color conscious process*, which was explained as a "willingness to put color at the front of their leadership practices" (p. 193). Conclusive findings by Mabokela and Madsen (2005) indicated diversity issues are a major concern for both educational leaders. Though the European American leaders cared about diversity, they were unable to promote successful inclusive diversity practices in their respective

schools. The African American educational leaders were able to *float* between the various building constituencies, but their competency levels were constantly questioned. Trust, dismantling stereotypical beliefs about students of color, differing pedagogical practices, cultural awareness additional dialogue, and addressing diversity issues among educational leaders were the recommendations from the study for improving educational leadership practice (Mabokela & Madsen, 2005). Similar concerns have been expressed by other researchers (Evans, 2007b; Tyler, 2016; Wilson, Riehl, & Hassan 2010).

The lack of cultural awareness, stereotypical beliefs, and the presence of color blindness regarding students of color regarding differing pedagogical practice were presented in a multisite-case research study of Evans (2007a). Evans indicated the need for changes in the school's educational leaders' practices. The Evans (2007a) study included three suburban schools undergoing demographic change. She reported that of the three suburban schools, there were no Black principals, but the White principals were recommended by their school districts as embracing diversity for all students. Issues of color blindness, stereotypical actions by faculty, and some existing parents and families to make sense of diversity continued throughout the study, as the overall status quo remained, and the new students entered the buildings. Eventually, two Black administrators, a dean and a vice principal of discipline, were added to the administrative team to help with the new students. On the other hand, elimination of an instructional practice, such as the Black assembly program, adding security guards, and block schedules, hindered change and understanding of diversity as it related to the new students.

Comprehensive findings from Evans (2007a) reported that all three schools presented multiple differences and interpretations based on deficit understandings and stereotypical biases as they relate to demographic changes among building-level personnel. Lack of awareness of historical, sociocultural ideologies hindered the interpretation of diversity matters as they related to new students and their families. Furthermore, race appeared to be a significant factor relating to the development of adequate academic progress for all students (Evans, 2007a). Additionally, parental contact appeared culturally biased, which restricted collaboration for the benefit of all students. Power and political struggles from the school districts and the building staff and administrators also impacted diversity conceptualizations in each of the schools (Evans, 2007a).

Insufficient consideration of diversity often leads to deficit-based conceptualizations by school districts and their personnel (Khalifa et al., 2016; Tyler, 2016; Tyler et al., 2016; Villegas, & Lucas, 2002;). This appeared particularly true in many suburban districts, as exemplified in the research of Tyler (2016). In her multisite study of six suburban districts, she posited three discourses. First, she posited aspiring students are needed for a diverse society, which may be difficult because understanding diversity varies among students, parents, and educators. Second, she posited the use of color muteness, which is described as avoiding discussions about race while insisting on individuality. Third, she posited there were deficit perspectives, which places blame on parents, students, and environmental factors as they relate to marginalized students due to their race, ethnicity, linguistics, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Tyler (2016) reported inequitable practices, particularly as they relate to marginalized students, hinder an understanding of diversity. Hence, an incomplete understanding of diversity supports the White normative views instead of Whites recognizing and embracing non-dominant cultural capital. Furthermore, Tyler reported that the workforce remains homogenous and is reluctant to hire educational leaders who may have diverse personal and professional capacities that can be shared with their colleagues due to their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic, and linguistic background experiences. Tyler (2016) concluded that suburban school districts may offer an opportunity to establish new frontiers as they relate to socially just education practices. Recommendations by Tyler (2016) suggested improvement of educator preparation programs, obtaining more experienced teachers and equitable funding, examining segregating practices, and reflecting on personal beliefs may change and create an equitable, as well as an accessible, suburban school context.

Wilson (2009) examined the concept of change as presented by educational leaders who were considered *cultural change agents* and described as *cultural workers* within demographically changing communities. Her research investigated inequities, deficit-oriented behaviors, and a need for recognizing diverse students and their families within demographically changing suburban schools. Wilson's (2009) research took place within demographically changing suburban communities where the Hispanic population was rapidly increasing. The researcher questioned two White female elementary principals regarding the processes they utilized while implementing equitably oriented programs. The proposed diversity programs were intended to provide inclusion strategies and sociocultural development for all students, parents, and partnering constituencies,

particularly as they related to implementing diversity within a rapidly changing demographic suburban community.

Wilson (2009) reported both educational leaders had an embryonic awareness of diversity and exhibited ambiguity in the implementation of diversity issues in their suburban schools. Furthermore, a former retired Black assistant principal was reinstated as a co-principal in one of the two schools. The Black principal expressed a strong interest in improving home/school relationships; she was well received by most parents, but she voiced concern over students' socioeconomic status. Additional deficit-based and stereotypical beliefs were reported by Wilson (2009).

For example, parent/school-related meetings were divided based on dominant language spoken. Thus, Spanish- and English-speaking parents were separated, and the Spanish-speaking parents were excluded from learning in-depth information relating to their children and the school procedures. Educational leaders also referred to Hispanic students and their families as *the other* or *timid undocumented residents*. Wilson (2009) continued to report deficit-based comments such as Black males were considered discipline problems and Black parents were considered confrontational. Furthermore, pedagogical teaching practices that included culturally relevant concepts were not supported by the principals or most faculty members. The overall report indicated a need for advocacy, equity, and a stronger connection to students and their families (Wilson, 2009).

Summary

Chapter 2 presented a selected review of educational literature relevant to this research study. Specific studies were investigated and indicated challenges faced by

BEL's as they work within demographically changing inner-rings suburban school contexts. As U.S. Census Bureau figures from 2010 and 2015 indicate, migratory patterns are changing, and they impact inner-ring suburban schools. This literature review described inadequate educational procedures and practices as well as lack of understanding for some marginalized students and their differing backgrounds. Implementation of diversification, stereotypical beliefs, and differing values created tensions among faculty, parents, and as communal partners. Isolation and alienation surfaced as a concern for Black educational leaders (Mabokela & Madsen, 2003, 2005). Consideration of change within a school's existing cultural practices often hinders progress as philosophical ideologies remain stagnant. However, BEL continue to look toward a future that includes a brighter future for students who remain on the periphery of the dominant society (Tyler, 2016).

Chapter 3 presents and discusses the research design, research context, data collection, and analysis.

Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

The social justice educational leadership practices demonstrated by many Black educational leaders within the inner-ring suburban areas remains an untapped phenomenon and requires deeper exploration (Evans, 2007b; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014). To understand this phenomenon, the primary research question was: *In what ways do Black educational leaders demonstrate social justice educational leadership in demographically changing inner-ring suburban school contexts in Western New York?* Using a social constructive approach to research is appropriate for a phenomenological research methodology (Creswell, 2007, 2009). Furthermore, phenomenological research focuses on individuals and their world view as it relates to their workplace, and their it focuses on sociocultural and socio-historical interactions.

Research Context

This study was conducted in Western New York where a large metropolitan city, Bridge Valley, is geographically adjacent to six suburban areas. The metropolitan city and the surrounding suburbs are presented using pseudonymous in this study. In 2020, the total city population of Bridge Valley was 210,565 with 43.7% White, 41.4% Black, and 16.36% Hispanic individuals (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). According to Kucser and Orfield (2014), Bridge Valley was one of the poorest city in the USA as it related to all metropolitan areas, with a 31.1% poverty rate. Of the total 97,158 housing units available, 89.6% were occupied, 37.7% were owner occupied, and 62.3% of the units

were rented. Furthermore, of the 37.7% owner-occupied units, home ownership was disaggregated as follows, Black 10.8%, White 22.2%, and Hispanic 3.3% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

The Bridge Valley school district has a total student population of 31,279 with 63% Black, 23% White, 10% Hispanic, 3% Asian, and 0 Hawaiian. In addition, 79% of the student population received free lunches, and 5% of students received a reduced-price lunch (New York State Education Department [NYSED], 2012). Furthermore, the administrative configuration consisted of 111 assistant principals and 66 principals. For the purpose of this study, four inner-ring suburban school (IRSS) districts were investigated because they had experienced rapid demographic changes. The four pseudonyms for the suburbs chosen for this study are: Greenville, Hamilton, South Clinton, and Clayton Hill.

Data regarding Greenville follows because it is related to total population and racial housing patterns. In 2010, Greenville's total housing included 41,190 available units, which were 95.7% occupied, with 73.3% owner occupied, and 26.7% of the units were rented. Furthermore, of the 73.3% owner-occupied units, home ownership is disaggregated as: White 68.5%, Black 1.8%, and Hispanic 1.5% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The total student population of Greenville school district was 11,838 with 76% White, 12% Black, 8% Hispanic, and 3% Asian or native Hawaiian. Additionally, 28% of the student population received a free lunch, and 11% of students received reduced-price lunches (NYSED, 2012). The administrative configuration consisted of 26 assistant principals and 21 principals who were not disaggregated by race or ethnicity in the District Report Card (NYSED, 2012).

A major industrial company in the area experienced restructuring, downsizing, and, eventually, it was sold, and demographic changes developed. The company had been the mainstay of the region, and it employed a substantial number of workers from the two inner-ring suburbs selected for this study.

Hamilton's district data indicated similar changes. Hamilton's total housing included 16,356 available units, with 100% of the units occupied, of which 65.4% were owner occupied, and 34.6% units were rented. The total student population of Hamilton school district was 5,439 with 68% White, 16% Hispanic, 12% Black, and 5% Asian or native Hawaiian students. Free student lunches were provided to 27% of the students, and reduced-priced lunches were provided to 10% of students (NYSED, 2012). The administrative configuration consisted of 10 principals and eight assistant principals. Hamilton was also impacted when the same major industry experienced restructuring, downsizing, and the sale.

Housing data in the South Clinton district indicated 12,318 housing units were available with 82% owner occupied, and 20% reported as rental units. The data regarding the South Clinton school district provided information pertaining to total student enrollment, race, and gender. The information is noted in numbers and percentiles. The district was composed of six buildings with a total student population of 2,986. Of the total school population, 52% were male, and 48% were female. Racial disaggregation indicated that the White student population was 52%, Black student population was 19%, and the Hispanic students totaled 21% of the student population. National free and reduced-price lunches for students who live in homes below the national poverty level presented as 47% and 9%, respectively (NYSED, 2012). Additional data reported

included English language learners (ELL), students with disabilities, and students living in poverty. The percentages presented were 4%, 10%, and 56%, respectively. There were 10 school-building-level administrators and nine counselors; seven counselors were at the secondary level, and two counselors were at the elementary level (NCES, 2015; School District Demographic System [SDDS], 2015).

Housing data in the Chapel Hill school district indicated that 13,641 housing units were available with 82.2% of them owner occupied, and 17.8% reported as rental units. Data regarding the Chapel Hill school district provided similar information pertaining to total student enrollment, race, and gender. The information is noted in numbers and percentiles. The district was composed of six buildings, with a total student population reported at 4,106. Of the total school population, 49% were male, and 51% were female. Racial disaggregation indicated that the White student population was 61%, Black student population was 17%, and Hispanic students were 11% of the population. National free and reduced-price lunches for students who lived in homes below the national poverty level presented as 32% and 8%, respectively. Additional data reported included ELLs, students with disabilities, and students living in poverty, at 3%, 12%, and 47%, respectively. There were 18 school-building-level administrators and nine counselors at the secondary level, but no counselors were noted at the elementary level (NCES, 2015; SDDS, 2015).

Research Participants

For this study, purposeful sampling was applied (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Using purposeful sampling allowed the researcher to create criteria with the intent of locating individuals who had a specific connection to the research question. The

participants were building-based Black educational leaders and served in administrative positions within an inner-ring suburban district. Participation included Black principals, assistant principals, and building-based educators who were performing administrative duties, such as lead teachers and counselors, within an inner-ring suburban context.

Research Participants

Table 3.1 shows the participants’ pseudonyms, district pseudonyms, ages, and professional titles.

Table 3.1

Participant Profiles

Pseudonym	District	Age	Professional Title
Michelle	Greenville	40	Principal, Assistant Principal*
Edward	Hamilton Greenville	46	Principal Assistant Principal*
Hannibal	South Clinton	42	Behavior Specialist*
Sheila	Chapel Hill	59	Lead Teacher*
Renaë	Multiple districts	39	Behavior Specialist*
Ruth	Hamilton	58	Counselor
Sara	Chapel Hill	40	Principal, Assistant Principal*
Barbara	South Clinton	52	Psychologist, Counselor *
Claire	South Clinton	36	Lead Teacher*
Terri	Greenville	44	Counselor

Note: *Former teacher.

Consideration of the professional expectations and responsibilities within their respective IRSS district was a focal point. Selecting participants from elementary, middle, and high schools provided an expanded view of the social justice educational leadership practices by the Black educational leaders within a specific inner-ring

suburban context. This study included male and female participants $N = 10$, who had experience in the public schools located in Greenville, Hamilton, South Clinton, and Chapel Hill school districts.

Using the selection criteria referenced as a starting point, the researcher first contacted via letters and emails (Appendix A), the local Black sororities, Black fraternities, Black churches, and professional organizations as well as using her personal networks to solicit potential study participants. Using referrals and participant responses, the researcher's next step was to send the prospective participants an email message containing information about the study and requesting their voluntary participation (Appendix B). The email also included their right to withdraw at any time without repercussion.

Data Collection Methods

Introductory materials were distributed via letters to Black sororities, fraternities, and churches. Additional bulletins were hand delivered to various churches, requesting their assistance (Cone, 1984, 2010). All information gathered from this study was confidential, and it required the participants to review and sign an informed consent form (Appendix C). The researcher utilized three data collection strategies including demographic profile sheets, field notes, and individual interviews or phone interviews as needed. Using the three types of collected data provided richer insights and pertinent information concerning the phenomenon. These qualitative techniques remained prevalent in collecting meaningful worldviews from an intended population and provided an in-depth description of the research inquiry. Furthermore, using triangulation, which employs several data collection methods for consistency among the participants,

indicated the participants' understandings, and it substantiated, as well as ensured, trustworthy data (Creswell, 2007).

Demographic profile sheets. The primary purpose of the demographic profile sheet was to serve as an efficient tool for gathering each participant's professional pathway and contextual information regarding the status at the time of the interview. Information about the educational background and various administrative positions held provided a clearer understanding of the participants' perspectives. The demographic profile sheets also provided substantial insights concerning the participants' existing, as well as previous work sites, geospatial locations, future aspirations, and overall interactions within his/her professional environment (Appendix D).

Field notes. The use of field notes taken by the researcher when interacting with the participants was a critical resource during data collection. These notes enabled the researcher to note gestures, body language, and add comments made by the participants. When reviewed, the field notes provided additional evidence concerning the participants' understanding of the phenomenon, and they presented opportunities for further clarification of the collected data at a later date.

Individual interviews. One 60-90-minute audiotaped interview was conducted with each participant. The intent of the interview questions was to obtain in-depth insider meaning and understanding of the core phenomenon as it related to this study inquiry (Appendix E). Additionally, gaining responses and personal insight into the research question sought to investigate the phenomena concerning the ways Black educational leaders demonstrate social justice educational leadership in demographically changing IRSS contexts in Western New York. During the interviews, the previously emailed

informed consent form and the demographic profile sheet were reviewed with each participant. The researcher addressed any concerns the participant voiced. The researcher's field notes were also explained to the participants, and they were utilized by the researcher during the interview. In following up, and to advance member checking and accuracy, audio tapes were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist and emailed to participants for review and further clarified if needed. Additionally, follow-up phone calls were used, if needed, after the interviews for clarification (Creswell, 2007; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009).

Data Analysis

The data analysis required the researcher to delve deeply into the participants' lived experiences to uncover various personal meanings. As the researcher endeavored to accomplish this task, she relied on several proven qualitative strategies (Creswell, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2016). The strategies included listening to audio-taped recordings, and reading and rereading the field notes, demographic profiles, and interview data. This process is referred to as *codification of data*, and it was used to categorize collected data into "patterns, families and similar constructs" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 9-16). Thus, the researcher was able to center, summarize, and analyze the understandings from the participants. Furthermore, all recordings were transcribed for future interpretation and understanding. This process of condensing data is referred to as *data reduction* and it began the process of coding as presented in a researcher's code book, which is also referred to as a code list (Creswell, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldaña, 2016).

Coding. Coded data permitted the researcher to further develop and interpret the participants' meanings. For example, the researcher expressed a participant's insights by "describing, classifying, and interpreting text or visual images" (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). Additionally, the researcher clustered similar words, phrases, and sentences, which assisted in the development of specific categories and themes. The process is often referred to as indexing (Creswell, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994). All resulting data was further coded and provided the textual descriptions (what happened), structural descriptions (how it was contextualized), and it culminated in the essence of participants' interpretations of meanings as they related to the inquiry (Creswell, 2007; Saldaña, 2016). Three types of coding were used in this study, including a priori, open coding, and axial coding.

The first level of coding referred to a priori, allowed the researcher to list pre-existing themes from researched resources, as well as list her personal intuitive views regarding the topic of inquiry (Creswell, 2007). A priori codes (Appendix F) were drawn from the research materials as they related to social justice educational leadership (Dingus, 2006b; Horsford, 2014; Randolph & Sanders, 2011; Siddle Walker & Byas, 2009; Theoharis, 2007). A priori coding enabled the researcher to note the participants' values, transcribed interview notes, social media materials, journals, and diaries if they were requested (Saldaña, 2016). Coding, when applied to the research context, enabled the researcher to locate similar experiences as explained from all types of collected participant-descriptive data. This process enabled the researcher to use the researcher code book/code list to further review, reduce, and realign coded data as she compiled

relevant data. After completing the initial coding, the next level of coding (Appendix F) commenced (Creswell, 2007, 2009; Saldaña, 2016).

The researcher code book/code list was an integral part of the research process, it and assisted the researcher in tracking and monitoring various participants' statements as noted in the transcribed data. Furthermore, as the study continued, an evolutionary view of the emergent data was reviewed and clarified as needed (Creswell, 2009). This analytic tool allowed a systematic process for describing, organizing, compiling, and referring to the participant responses for the purpose of grouping clusters, categories, and subcategories of participant data. The listing of codes established a concise record of the pertinent data within the overall study, and it provided rich contextual data as the study coding proceeded (Creswell, 2007, 2009; Saldaña, 2016).

The next step in coding referred to as *open coding* also referred to as *initial coding* and was applied to the overall qualitative coding process (Creswell, 2007; Saldaña, 2016). Initial readings included transcribed interviews, participant diaries, journals, recordings, videos, and recognizing specific wording (Creswell, 2007; Saldaña, 2016). During this examination of the participants' transcribed recordings, grouping of words, statements, and phrases were highlighted in the text, particularly clusters of repetitive texts were highlighted. The repetitive wording was noted for a more in-depth consideration. As the coding process continued and narrowed the textual information, the researcher used the code book to condense repetitive phrases and move to a more in-depth coding process, which is referred to as *axial coding*.

Axial coding was used to flush out more specific clusters, categories, and themes, which are referred to as "core phenomenon" that continued to surface while the

researcher also continued to review textual and structural document contents (Creswell, 2007). For additional analysis purposes, axial coding was divided into two segments referred to as non-hierarchical and described as a cluster of related information that was hierarchical and is also known as *flat coding*, which further defined the previous clusters of related information. Continually streamlining coded material allowed the researcher to obtain a schematic or diagram, as well as rich textual information and understandings, which strengthened data from the participants' perspectives (Creswell, 2007).

Trustworthiness. A rigorous analysis of the data ensured evidence of “credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability” (Stringer, 2007, pp. 57-59), and it contributed to the study's trustworthiness as each concept validated the use of rigorous research approaches to collect the data. Credibility includes the use of triangulation and member checking, and both were used in this study. *Transferability* refers to repeating and implementing the study's context, activities, and events through several methods and obtaining a level of trust that ensures that the results were repeated. *Dependability* relies on an inquiry audit of the research and that the research followed detailed description procedures (Stringer, 2007). Lastly, the overall audit confirmed that the data used were accurate, related to the study, and supported the veracity of the research study (Stringer, 2007).

For this study, qualitative rigor and trustworthiness included the researcher bracketing, triangulating data, using the services of a critical friend, and member checking (Creswell, 2009). Researcher bracketing included recognizing, listing, and minimizing the researcher's personal biases so as not to encumber the participants' meanings and descriptions during the inquiry process. Researcher bracketing began with

self-reflection on personal biases and maintaining a separate diary of thoughts. By reviewing the material in the self-reflection diary, the researcher monitored her actions and responses as they related to the participants' dialogues (Creswell, 2007).

Triangulation of the data refers to investigating and using multiple data sources as they pertain to the inquiry (Creswell, 2007, 2013). The peer reviewer, who is described as a *critical friend* of the researcher, and who had qualitative data experience and an objective eye, was utilized to provide an unprejudiced view point of the collected data (Creswell, 2013). The critical friend also reviewed the coding process and the collected coded data. Lastly, member checking involved follow-up contact with the participants for clarification and feedback regarding specific data, such as phrases, words, and sentences, that were transcribed (Creswell, 2013).

Data Management

Confidentiality and security processes maintained the ethical practices that undergirded the success of this inquiry. Therefore, storing and safe-guarding all the documentation required a controlled space in the form of a locked file cabinet. All data is secured in the researcher's office within a dedicated, locked file cabinet. Additionally, collected and computerized data is stored on an external hard drive that is also locked in the dedicated file cabinet.

A research journal was created and contains pertinent information concerning participant data. To ensure confidentiality, a master list was used and included each participant's pseudonym. This manner of identifying the participants acted as a cross-reference approach, and it allowed this researcher to quickly pinpoint and retrieve specific data, such as the participant demographic profile sheet and hard copies of the

individually transcribed interview responses, which highlighted pertinent information such as the participants' references to the core phenomenon. Gestures and personal concerns were included in the research journal. The pseudonyms were always referenced when presenting data regarding the specific participants.

Handwritten field notes were computerized, printed by the researcher, and were kept in the research journal to be reviewed throughout the investigation. Compiling and maintaining the transcribed notes within the research journal provided an accessible storage procedure and a source for reflection by the researcher. Finally, when compiled, logged, and reviewed, the research journal captured the essence of the descriptive interactions provided by participants vis-à-vis the phenomena while the researcher acted as the instrument of the research.

Summary

This chapter presented the qualitative methodology used in this phenomenological research approach as it related to a specific research question. Various forms of collected data ensured the trustworthiness and rich textual data that emerged. Utilizing and reviewing transcripts based on demographic profile sheets, field notes, and individual interviews provided units of meaningful data that substantiated the initial inquiry. Additional strategies, such as researcher bracketing, triangulation, using a critical peer, and member checking, demonstrated the overall trustworthiness of the research questions.

Chapter 4 reports the social justice educational practices and experiences utilized by the BEL study participants within an IRSS context.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

Chapter 4 reports the findings of this study with three emerging themes and three subthemes relating to Black educational leaders' social justice educational leadership within inner-ring suburban school (IRSS) contexts. The study's guiding research question is: In what ways do Black educational leaders (BEL) demonstrate social justice educational leadership in demographically changing inner-ring suburban school contexts in Western New York? BEL's insights and perspectives were obtained with use of demographic profiles sheets, researcher field notes, and individual interviews. Each theme relates to the research question, which addresses the lived experiences and practices of BEL who, at the time of the interviews or previously, worked in demographically changing IRSS contexts. The three themes are: student advocacy as a Black educational leadership social justice practice, conceptualizing equity practices – one size does not fit all students, and providing accessibility to various educational opportunities and experiences.

The first theme, student advocacy as a Black educational leadership social justice practice, describes BEL who are passionate and committed to bold interactive educational issues, as they specifically relate to supporting marginalized students. Because of race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and/or disability, these students are often marginalized and overlooked from an educational perspective. Based on the participants' accounts, social justice educational leaders question and eliminate stigmas

associated with marginalization for the betterment of the individual students within IRSS contexts.

This primary theme has two subthemes including self-advocacy as a learning tool for students, teachers, and parents; and Black educational leaders confront stereotypical patterns. Each subtheme further examined BEL's experiences and practices as they operated as an administrator within their IRSS. The first subtheme explores BEL's practices that encourage students, teachers, and parents to self-advocate with in their school environment. The second subtheme investigates how BEL experienced and confronted stereotypical behaviors and actions from peers and colleagues as they operated in their respective administrative positions.

The second theme, conceptualizing equity practices – one size does not fit all, provides insight into the values of social justice educational leaders. Specifically, the theme explores values that enable these leaders to consistently infuse fair educational practices in support of marginalized students. Equity is the result of the BEL connecting what students' backgrounds bring to the classroom with the requirements of the curriculum. Basically, BEL meet the individual needs of marginalized students. Understanding students' overall values and life style, as well as sociocultural backgrounds, ensures students are positioned for equitable, justifiable educational advancement.

The last theme, providing accessibility to various educational opportunities and experiences, explains how BEL have recognized that education involves exposure to broader experiences beyond the classroom. As described by the participants, BEL may realize and understand the importance of opening various experiences for marginalized

students. Such opportunities may exist within educational programs inside of schools as well as in the BEL's communities, which may accommodate the individual needs of marginalized students. Social justice educational leaders understand the relevancy of preparing students to strengthen their individual learning potentials as they mature into adulthood. This primary theme has one subtheme, which is Black educational leaders' accessibility as a resource for students. This subtheme provides insights into the participants' self-reflections as well as self-expectations as a role model for marginalized students.

Student Advocacy as a Black Educational Leadership Social Justice Practice

The BEL participants discussed the need to act within their administrative positions as advocates for diverse students. The participants described experiencing busy days as they work with students, faculty, and parents to oversee the academic advancement of students. Each BEL participant practiced and experienced the need to actively advocate for the needs of marginalized students based on their existing and previous experiences.

Principal Michele began her educational leadership practices as a teacher in her IRSS district. She had over 16 years of educational experience in her district. She advanced professionally within her leadership position and moved into administration as an assistant principal, and she eventually became the principal of a large elementary IRSS. During her interview, Principal Michele discussed changes in demographics regarding the racial composition of the students. For example, within less than 20 years, the majority of her district's White student population decreased, while the Hispanic, Black, and Asian student populations increased. Approximately 70% of the students in

her school received free or reduced-cost lunches, and there is a high rate of academic need. Given these changes, she indicated the importance of advocacy as she performed daily responsibilities:

One of the major roles I have as principal is to advocate for my building and what the needs are, given the factors in our building and [what] students' needs are. So, I also advocate from a building level to the district level to get our needs met; that's part of my job.

On a personal level, the BEL participants described spending a lot of time as they work to understand students and stand up for students who may be marginalized. For example, Barbara, an IRSS high school psychologist, spends hours scheduling student observations, interviewing teachers, gathering parent input, and writing and analyzing data to formulate accurate, unbiased mandated reports. She appeared passionate about advocating for students, as well as acting as an intermediary for parents during meetings regarding their children, if needed. She reiterated the need to advocate for students,

I don't just advocate for minority students, I advocate for all students. I advocate for the truth. I advocate for the underdog, the special education students that may not be getting the same treatment as a student who is not in special education.

Barbara also described how she advocated for all students, "How do I advocate? I speak up in meetings. I have conversations with principals. I send emails. I call parents to encourage parents to seek additional help for their children." Across the participants, counselors, behavioral specialists, and lead teachers shared similar descriptions of their practices.

To further illuminate advocacy as it relates to student needs, perspectives from the counselors, behavioral specialists, and lead teachers frequently stressed the need to advocate for all students, particularly students placed in special education programs. For example, Renae, a behavioral specialist, worked with students from several districts. Her students had other health-impaired handicapping conditions and thus were frequently transferred from their home school to a special facility for behavioral and learning assistance. Renae provided similar advocacy viewpoints as described by Barbara, regarding all students, as she discussed individualized student needs with some faculty. “Regarding advocacy, I find myself doing a lot of that, especially for our special education student population as they prepare for future outcomes as adults.”

Renae described interactions with White faculty who, at times, addressed intergroup conflicts based on faculty differences and beliefs about students. Renae also described incidents of insensitivity and personal biases among White staff as they worked with primarily Black and Hispanic students. She stated.

So, I’m constantly finding myself talking to staff, saying, “Have you really had a conversation with this kid to figure out why they may be saying the things they’re saying or why they may be doing the things they’re doing?” “Have you ever sat and talked with them?” “Did you just try to get to know them?” So, I definitely feel that I’m constantly advocating on behalf of the students to the staff, to get them to understand that just because this is what the paperwork says, 20 suspensions or whatever it is, that’s not who this person is. So, you need to learn who this person is, if you want to be able to build a relationship to make any sort of difference. Building relationships are significant when establishing caring

interpersonal connections with students who are marginalized and their families.

So, I'd definitely want to say, as far as advocacy, that I find myself doing a lot of that.

Relationship building was also presented and stressed by Terri as a critical construct when advocating for students, especially given that the majority of the overall community population was White within her IRSS district. Being one of a very few Black educational leaders in the Hamilton School District often created barriers or hedges in communication on behalf of students' needs. Her White colleagues failed to understand her determination to advocate for marginalized students, which stemmed from her relationship practices. Terri discussed the importance of establishing genuine relationships with students, parents, and even colleagues. Terri strongly believed in honest relationships as a foundation for building meaningful adult-to-student connections. As a former counselor, Terri indicated,

Being in a relationship with them and having them understand where I come from, what I stand for, what my educational philosophy was critically important, because I couldn't really move forward if my students and parents did not trust me and they did not believe I had their best interest at heart.

Terri unequivocally emphasized the importance of strong relationships as, "the backbone of who I am, what I do, and how I operate as a leader."

Having work experience with youth for over 20 years, Hannibal, a behavioral specialist, had a broad background working with all types of diverse students and their academic needs. His experiences and practices ranged from kids on the block, in the park, at recreation centers to incarcerated youth and the penal system. His commitments

to youth development lead him to obtain additional educational coursework, which enabled him to further his higher educational credentialing and eventually obtain certification as an elementary school teacher. Hannibal explained his personal reasoning for advocating for students:

I know what it feels like to be the only Black individual in specific situations. I have to represent my kids at all cost! If not me, then who? I've been there because I knew where they [students] were and what they are experiencing from a personal level.

He stressed the significance of developing a trusting relationship with students. The trust factor regarding faculty appeared reticent. He stated,

I am going to be straightforward with you, I pull [work with] people that I trust. So, if educators are committed to the best interest of kids, then we move forward. If I feel they're not committed as an educator, I disassociate myself from them.”

He further explained the importance of understanding the total child and his or her surrounding dynamics and lifestyles saying, “My kids needed to understand their future life as they become self-sufficient working adults.”

Operating from a connective perspective, which included personal obligations for and about students, appeared to substantiate the BEL participants in their various IRSS contexts. Principal Edward began his career as a teacher and eventually moved into educational administration as an instructional leader in two different IRSS districts. His administrative background included roles as an assistant principal and a principal. Principal Edward considered himself a BEL who practices advocacy in conjunction with equity by way of accessibility. He worked in a large IRSS where there were less than five

Black educators. Within one particular IRSS, inequitable situations relating to Black frustrated parents and their children surfaced. As a BEL, he recounted an instance where well-educated, affluent IRSS Black parents relied on him as a voice of support for their children when the district did not understand nor recognize the needs of its diverse students.

Edward listened to parents' concerns regarding their children's educational development, and he took it upon himself to champion the parents' cause within a local community meeting. This, he indicated, was a risky stance, as he could face retribution from the school board. However, he felt an obligation and a moral responsibility to speak up on the behalf of the frustrated parents and for the welfare of their children. He exclaimed, "For the parents, I became symbolically their only hope to have their voices heard. I was under pressure as a BEL as I was one of the two Black representatives that they could go to." His efforts and well-defined actions prompted the community to hear and respond to the parents' concerns.

Self- advocacy as a learning tool for students, teachers, and parents. As a subtheme for advocacy, the BEL participants discussed advocating for students, teachers, and parents. Each BEL practiced and experienced the need to actively support the needs of their students. Yet, the BEL also encouraged teachers and parents to self-advocate for students as well as for themselves. Finding solutions to concerns required communicating among all individuals associated with the individual student needs. On a personal level, BEL spend a lot of time as they work to understand students and stand up for students who may be marginalized.

As one of less than three counselors in a demographically changing inner-ring suburban high school, Ruth, a veteran of 25 years, had experiences in urban and IRSS contexts. The majority of her counseling experiences were in an IRSS. According to Ruth, her IRSS district was experiencing growth in student populations and it was alleged by the community as well as some teachers, that many new students had academic and behavioral problems. This assumptive response by the community and some teachers was countered, yet, a large percentage of the teaching force in her building sought to alter some of their pedagogical practices to advocate for and accommodate diverse students.

Ruth described her multi-level procedure to assist individual students to become self-advocates. She interpreted advocacy “as supporting students” and subsequently spent a great deal of time assisting all the students in seeking positive resolutions as they related to their concerns. She outlined her personal in-depth practices as they related to her “personal mission in life.”

I listen as I interact with my students, ask them how they feel about the concern. I provide guidance and suggestions regarding self-advocacy. We try to problem solve, consider “the others’ perspectives,” while developing the students’ critical skill levels as it relates to their future.

Conversely, Principal Sara, who originally worked as an assistant principal in an urban setting, was elevated to an elementary principal in an IRSS district, and she discussed her experiences in the IRSS context. As an elementary principal split between two elementary schools, she considered the irrefutable differences between the two IRSS settings. Due to socio-economic family differences and backgrounds, students assigned to each school experienced uneven exposure to various resources. Many children in one of

the two schools had extra-curricular activities provided by their family, such as trips to museums or theatre experiences. On the other hand, children in families with lower socio-economic levels lacked similar opportunities to experience such activities. One school was privileged to unlimited resources from many of their families, while the other school struggled to maintain resources, which was due, in part, to limited family responsibilities and availability of resources. Principal Sara, who had worked in both urban and IRSSs for 15 years, found it necessary to approach the concept of advocacy for the two schools in similar ways, regardless of the socio-economic status of each group of students.

Consideration was given to the ages of the students, yet Sara established specific procedures that stressed advocacy for her students and faculties. Students in both schools received counseling in their classrooms, which stressed speaking up for their needs. Faculty members, as well as parents, were encouraged to bring their perceptions of one-sided concerns to Sara if they felt a school-related matter was misleading or ambiguous. She expressed how she demonstrated practices of advocacy:

For staff, an open-door policy; for parents, I accept phone calls and email during off hours. I always encourage students and staff to speak up for what they need [at] various times, and [that they] should be obtained in a professional or appropriate manner.

Sara indicated the importance of speaking up, especially since many marginalized students and their parents often felt ignored or isolated within their IRSS setting.

Claire, a bilingual lead teacher, highlighted the relevancy of diverse cultural practices, values, and beliefs within an IRSS district. She described her experiences in a

building that saw an increase in bilingual students. Claire had over 10 years working in urban and IRSSs in Grades K-12. Although she was relatively new the BEL in her building, she firmly stressed the importance of self-advocacy, especially for parents with limited English proficiency. Because she was fluent in another language and understood the feelings and cultural perspectives of some parents, she asserted her belief and practices about advocacy.

I believe parents need to be informed of their rights and know how to advocate for their students' educational needs, especially parents from other countries [who] may have green cards. They need to advocate and speak up – request a translator!

BEL confront stereotypical patterns. Another subtheme of advocacy presented concerns regarding stereotypical matters. The BEL participants reflected on, and addressed, stereotypical behaviors of colleagues toward students and themselves. Ruth relayed an intimidation factor she noticed in her school. According to Ruth, “A group of Black male students gathered in a certain spot daily before school [and] began to talk. There was never a problem, but some faculty and staff felt intimidated and nervous about the group of Black males.” Ruth implied that the group of young Black males never committed any violation of school rules, yet the faculty lacked empathy and understanding and appeared biased. The underlying assumption implied the possibility of danger from the faculty view point where there was no danger at all.

In another school, Barbara dealt with a stereotypical assumption regarding city and suburban students. She corrected an assumption about Black students and conveyed:

If Johnny is having a behavior problem, the first thing that individuals want to say is that, “Well, John came from an urban school.” But I sometimes have to call

folks' attention to the fact that John was born and bred right here in this suburb. I feel that sometimes I have to advocate for the truth.

Terri related her personal inner-ring youthful experiences as a Black student growing up in an IRSS district. While in middle and high school, she felt insecure and even threatened by the actions of fellow students. Her classmates often expressed negative comments and actions toward her. Some faculty and staff discouraged and overlooked her capabilities and ignored her potential as a serious academic student. Additionally, Terri's sociocultural background was not always recognized, appreciated, or accepted. Racial and academic assumptions were prevalent as she reported the following story:

I was called the "n" word and [was] spit on while I rode the school bus. When I entered high school, I was supposedly incompetent and unable to succeed in Advance Placement (AP) classes. My hair was bad, wrong, and messy.

Yet, she remained self-confident and assured because of her extended family values and beliefs as well as from her church teachings. Moreover, her experiences as a youngster enabled her to empathize with many marginalized students. Furthermore, she stated;

When I am requested by a Black parent to sit in on a meeting with their child and other administrators, I often apologize for the allegations the child may be facing, because I have experienced similar occasions in my youth.

She further implied the need as a BEL to practice constructive adult behaviors and to overcome negative, stereotypical beliefs and expectations toward all students when she entered educational leadership. She said, "So I can understand and advocate for all

students; that's my moral and ethical responsibility—to be that advocate for the kids who are invisible [and] who people don't see.”

Another blatant example of a stereotypical incident was experienced by Barbara. She stated, “I was summoned to a meeting because ‘the student was Black and so was I.’” After hearing the principal's statement and witnessing his action as well as his behavior, Barbara implied she was angry—then, and even now—and she indicated the importance of some educators needing to be aware of their insensitive statements, stereotypical comments, actions, and offensive behaviors.

Advocating practices and experiences demonstrated by the BEL participants indicated the importance of committing to their moral and ethical responsibility for students, especially marginalized students. Students considered marginalized due to racial, ethnic, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and disability frequently remain invisible within the overall student populations. Students' social and cultural backgrounds remain relevant to their overall educational success and may require an educator who is willing to challenge the school's norms and practices. Black educational leaders often recognize the overlooked students and advocate by adding their voices to students' circumstances while stressing students' individual needs. As the research literature has indicated, BEL go beyond expectations as they engage and interact with their students.

Conceptualizing Equity Practices One Size Does Not Fit All Students

The second theme stressed the importance of recognizing the individuality of the students and their respective academic needs and development as learners. The BEL participants' voices not only described advocacy as an educational practice, but they also

incorporated equity as an educational practice to further support all students. The BEL participants in this study continued sharing their personal and professional experiences related to equitable practices within their demographically changing inner-ring schools. As reported by all the participants, students in IRSS contexts are marginalized due to their race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and or disability. When considering individual and equitable practices for marginalized students, Terri, a former high school counselor noted that demographics were beginning to rapidly change in her IRSS contexts. Various diverse families and their children were moving into this particular IRSS district. Some new arrivals were immigrants as well as an educated Black population. Terri believed and briefly stated her practices of leadership responsibility, “It is my duty to level the playing field for all of my students daily, in and out of this building, especially as it relates to student academic development!”

When further considering equity, academic need varies for each individual student. Being positioned between two elementary schools and their differing socio-economic status seemed frustrating at times, according to Sara. However, moving beyond frustration, Sara believed,

One student may require more, while another student requires less, depending the time and place. Understanding different students’ needs means not being afraid to give the students what they need when they need it, regardless of their ethnicity or their race or cultural beliefs.

Claire, who had experienced discrimination in her life, explained the importance of equity from different vantage points. Being fluent in another language allowed her to empathize with English language learners (ELL) more than many of her colleagues. She

provided several examples by saying, “So I am able to put myself in the shoes of [the] students. I use culturally appropriate pedagogical teaching practices to facilitate learning for my bilingual students who may otherwise experience isolation from the general student body.” The ability to capitalize on the negative constructs experienced by marginalized students enabled the BEL participants to better support and include students who remained on the periphery of the educational spectrum. Simply expressed, each student, regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and/or disability, is an individual with specific educational needs and abilities. As for the BEL participants, this individuality appeared to be at the forefront of educational practices as Black educational leaders seek to educate all students IRSS contexts.

Claire also described her willingness to reach out and collaborate with various teaching faculty especially in special education classrooms, because:

It’s really important to make sure there is collaboration, so we often met after school or beforehand to make sure the teaching assistant and I were on the same page. Furthermore, I am willing to try to bridge some educational leadership gaps among faculty, if given the opportunity.

She also stressed the importance of equity for girls pursuing fields of math, science, and technology. “Often teachers do not encourage girls to consider higher levels of technology, either, and that is unfortunate.” Claire realized the teachers’ biased oversights and suggested the teachers “encourage female students’ projects as well as continue to encourage their participation in science, technology, engineering, and math.” Supporting students encapsulates the practices of BEL participants as they sought to

ensure academic progress for all students. Furthermore, ensuring appropriate testing situations were adhered to become critical for marginalized students.

As one IRSS sought to replace retiring faculty, Sheila, a veteran teacher, was tapped for a special administrative assignment. As a lead teacher assigned and prepared to oversee statewide and local exams within an IRSS district, Sheila explained the importance of maintaining proper testing situations for all students. She said, “I take my administrative responsibility very seriously. I made sure all students were in appropriate educational settings and proctors fully understood the parameters under which they must operate so as to enable students to have the best testing environment possible.” This appeared to be a frustrating procedure for Sheila at times, as some teachers felt she was incompetent, yet Sheila maintained her determination and responsibility as she persevered for the betterment all of the student population.

In another situation, Principal Michele expressed the importance of establishing equitable testing protocols as well as boundaries for students and faculty. Michele, the elementary principal, provided insights into a one-on-one conversation where she felt the need to help a teacher understand the importance of equitable parameters regarding students’ needs. She said,

For example, a teacher and I discussed the importance regarding three teacher concerns, including [the] teacher’s intended program, which was scheduled for the entire school, state-mandated testing for bilingual students, as well as the administrative preplanned and authorized kindergarten field trip.

Principal Michele acknowledged the concerns but described the individual group needs as a crucial matter especially as it related to equity. She said, “The teacher

eventually accepted the importance of state-mandated testing but wanted the kindergarten students to attend the program.” Although the teacher continued to object to Principal Michele’s concern about equitable practices, the conversation continued:

I pushed back and suggested [that] missing the program for both groups should have been equally distressing but the needs of each group remained more important in this case. The teacher eventually replied, “I never thought of this scenario in that manner!”

The BEL participants, though frustrated at times, continued to persist to share their personal and professional social justice educational practices and views as they strived to create better educational environments for all students, parents, and colleagues they encountered.

To sustain equitable teaching practices, Renae, the behavioral specialist who worked across several school districts, often facilitated classroom instruction. Renae realized the importance of incorporating students’ social and cultural backgrounds into a more meaningful pedagogy. She reported, “As a co-facilitator, I observed some teaching strategies used by teachers that could be updated and be more culturally relevant, especially since most of the student population was Black or Latino.” Not only did Renae address the individual teachers in her building, she also instructed support staff regarding the importance of addressing students’ backgrounds, “I suggested changes for teachers, paraprofessionals, one-to-one teachers, counselors, and some parents that would increase equity for all of my students.” The BEL participants continually pushed to create a learning environment that enhanced the teaching and learning experiences for students and staff.

As an assistant principal in a low-capacity, middle-school building, Edward received an unofficial title of instructional leader. He used his leadership skills to investigate data related to students' academic growth and lack thereof. Moreover, exploring data enabled Edward to design a plan to decrease an achievement gap and provide equitable student development for all students, especially for a self-contained class of Black male students. Edward pointed out the oversight of faculty and the injustice to all students by not interpreting the data correctly.

The data, as reported by Edward, reflected a disparity among academic scores between Black and White students. Based on the data, it was apparent that many White students should have been placed in the self-contained class, and many Black students should not have been placed in the self-contained class. His research indicated the need to eliminate the self-contained class of Black male students. He said, "After we, [the] faculty and I, examined the data, it was clear that change was required, and the self-contained class of Black male students was dismantled. Furthermore, many Black male students were denied opportunities to make academic advancement." The use of data clearly demonstrated the disparity of educational achievement for all students. Additionally, this disparity, if constantly addressed potentially, also decreased the achievement gap as it relates to marginalized students.

Edward shared how the data indicated that subjective placement in the self-contained class was not equitable. He stated, "The teachers understood the importance of equity and accessibility within academic settings for all students. Thus, the teachers institutionalized a plan of revision and sustainability, as well as more objectivity, in approaching and placing all students in various classes." According to Edward, this

experience resulted in a sustainable process with “teacher buy in,” which existed as of his interview. Furthermore, the students as well as BEL participants often experienced inequitable situations that limited BEL’s individual proficiency and abilities in creating an equitable situation.

Counselor Ruth described an occasion where she experienced personal inequity in distribution of students with specific behavioral problems saying:

I felt as if the students with the most behavioral needs were placed in my case load. But I still did things in a certain way and provided extra time with my students because that is part of my personal life mission.

Ruth described how the other counselors appeared reluctant to accept diversity among the student population. Because of the other counselors’ reluctance, Ruth felt a moral and ethical connection to diverse students and worked tirelessly with students who were perceived as challenging.

Sheila, a lead teacher on an administrative assignment, self-reflected on her cultural background and her educational position as an administrator. She described a sense of disrespect, devaluation, and exasperation as she frequently experienced colleagues, parents, and students questioning her professional capabilities. She said, “Though I was not born in the United States, I felt as though my leadership insights and abilities were not valued by my peers and colleagues. I was asked about my certification credentials by peers, colleagues, and parents.”

Furthermore, Sheila wanted her students to realize that Black people in other areas of the world also strived to achieve their fullest potential, despite the biases that

often existed from the larger society. Additionally, she was often confronted by students who,

Questioned my integrity as a professional, which, at times, reflected [the] actions of the adults in the building, and yet, the greatest blessing I experienced occurred near the end of the school year. A student said to me, “Thank you, I really learned something this year!”

Sara also spoke of the insensitivity, isolation, and inequitable experiences during leadership meetings where she was the only BEL among other principals, assistant principals, and district officials. She described the challenge of being the only Black professional in meetings in that type of environment saying, “The area I found more challenging, in all honesty, was with my colleagues, such as principals, assistant principals, and other administrators, who shared additional or similar administrative roles in leadership.” Her professional frame of reference changed, and she experienced feelings of devaluation and lack of professional respect by her colleagues. However, knowing what her personal and professional beliefs, values, and practices were enabled her to overcome potential feelings of disrespect, irrelevance, and rejection. Realizing a biased environment of depreciation and a lack of cultural diversity existed, she reported, “I had to make several adjustments with what I spoke [about], how I spoke, how much I shared, and understanding that, unfortunately [for them], I view myself as an equal, but I wasn’t treated as an equal.”

Similar equity experiences were reported by Terri from a personal viewpoint. Terri, a counselor who grew up in an IRSS, tenaciously reported a lack of cultural awareness among many of her colleagues, stated,

I think my White colleagues sometimes fail to realize that I am a racially mixed African American woman who has barriers and hurdles that they never have to overcome or just things that I have to be conscious about that they don't have to be conscious about. I think there are things I always have to be mindful of that I don't think my White colleagues have to be mindful of.

The BEL participants continually appeared to experience challenges as they confronted issues concerning equity for students, particularly students who may have been marginalized by race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and/or disability. However, the BEL participants' practices stressed fairness and quality for students who were on the periphery of the educational spectrum. Furthermore, the BEL often found themselves experiencing similar disparities regarding equity in their work environment. Yet, obstructions aside, the BEL participants' abilities and determination to gain equitable educational settings for their students appeared to be demonstrated daily. The BEL sought to instill and prepare their students with consistent quality initiatives as their students explored their individual potential as learners.

Providing Accessibility to Various Educational Opportunities and Experiences

The third and final theme details obtaining additional educational opportunities and going the extra mile by the BEL participants as they related to marginalized students. This theme is described from a legal perspective as it relates to some marginalized students. According to federal legislation, students classified as disabled are entitled to "have opportunities to develop their talents, share their gifts, and contribute to their communities," (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2017, para. 1). Furthermore, the law "guaranteed students with disabilities access to a free appropriate public

education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE)” (USDOE, 2017, para. 2). As various state mandates and procedures are outlined, it becomes the responsibility of districts to oversee local schools and ensure adequate student documentation is compiled. Districts monitor this process via a district committee on special education.

At the school level, administrators, certified staff, parents, and teachers collaborate to develop an individual educational plan (IEP) for a student classified as disabled. The IEP is the framework that outlines, and guides expected educational development based on the specific needs of the student. The IEP must also provide measurable objectives, benchmarks, annual goals and appropriate accommodations. Supplementary aids, and services, modifications of supports systems are also included on the IEP (USDOE, 2017). Special education teachers, such as behavioral specialists, understand and provide mandated individual support services for students as needed. Behavioral specialists, who daily interact with marginalized students, strive to implement students’ IEP and obtain accessible opportunities beyond the school facility for individual students.

This theme expressed by the behavioral specialists, Hannibal and Renae, explained the extra support systems that are available for students with behavioral concerns. Their student population consisted of marginalized students who needed special education placement outside of the home school location, which was due to the severity of their behavioral issues. The IEP’s incremental plan addressed academic, social, emotional, and behavioral issues, which interfere with a student’s classroom learning. Although these incremental plans may provide accessibility to additional opportunities for some students, they may show a disparity toward some marginalized

students. Furthermore, while these plans provide educational services for some students as they grow into maturity, some student placements fail to adequately address the needs of other students, which is due partially from a lack of the students' cultural background.

Hannibal, a behavioral specialist, stated urgently, "I want my kids to have opportunities outside of the typical classroom setting. Often teachers just maintain the same old teaching procedures, but the world is changing, and my students need opportunities for exposure to different and future changes." Furthermore, locating accessible opportunities can often be challenging, however, he described possible sources of practical experiences for his students. He stated, "So, I seek and obtain partnerships with local organizations to help my kids see other professional individuals who are successful in the workplace. That's what my kids need to see as they grow academically!"

Rena, also a behavioral specialist, described the importance of helping parents who work daily and who desire to supplement learning at home. She highlighted the implemented plan:

We held open houses from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. and demonstrated ways their children can work on assignments in school and complete the assignment at home. We even kept our students after school until a parent (if parent requested) could attend the specific open house.

Daily work for behavioral specialists involved and incorporated their commitment and dedication, which demonstrated their personal and professional experiences and practices as BEL.

The other BEL participants noted the importance of parents' and students' awareness of resources beyond the school such as community initiatives, scholarships, and online resources. Similarly, Barbara discussed the lack of challenging opportunities and differing academic advantages for some students within the school setting. She referenced to the lack of students of color in honors classes. She reported the following observation:

I continue to struggle with this because teachers recommend students for honors classes. I continue to see in my school district that there aren't many students of color in honors classes. I think, in some regards, getting into honors classes is not as accessible to students of color.

Changing student schedules, as demonstrated by Ruth, illustrated a need to offer a rigorous academic program for a potential special education student. Ruth told of an incident where a student took up a tremendous portion of her counselling time almost daily. After several conversations with the student's teachers, who recommended a special education placement, an alternative plan was instituted. Ruth developed a plan that was more appropriate for the student's needs. After reviewing the student's records and additional data findings regarding the student, Ruth implemented a plan that eliminated a special education placement and identified a placement that was academically appropriate for the student's individual needs. Ruth said:

I realized a half-day alternative schedule was appropriate for the student's needs. She could attend school for a half day of academics and a half day at Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) program to learn about her

cosmetology passions . . . the student never stopped smiling and worked diligently to improve in academic areas.

Willingness to go the extra mile demonstrated a professional quality found in BEL participants as they attempted to fill individual students' academic needs.

Legal conditions regarding transgendered students, as directed by the State Safety Act, required that accessible opportunities and practices are available for students with sexual orientation differences within school settings. Terri expressed the need to balance the rights of the transgendered and non-transgendered needs for both groups of students. As Terri continued to actively resolve this matter, she presented the following scenario. "When dealing with this issue, I sometimes get beat up by community partners, but operating from my practices of honesty and my personal philosophy requires me to dig deep into my cultural up bring."

Terri, in making critical policy decisions, reached for her source of patience and persistence. "So, I reach for my nearby Bible and continue to gain inner strength and determination as I resolve the concerns." She also reminded the community partners of the importance of recognizing diversity and that all children should have access to educational opportunities. Frequently she incorporates various school, district, and state data to supplement her point of view, especially as it relates to students who are marginalized due to race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and or disability.

Ruth, on the other hand, discovered an action plan that addressed both transgendered and non-transgendered groups of students. Furthermore, Ruth identified accessible adjustments to be made in her school as they related to the rights and needs of

both transgendered and non-transgendered students. Ruth shared two stories of success in her school. She explained first scenario:

We had a student, born female but wanted to be identified by a male name. The school dealt with that in a very professional way. My supervisor talked to the parents and the student. When I was informed, I subsequently notified teachers by email.

This type of communication and connection to faculty allowed teachers to make adjustments within their individual classes to ensure individual student needs were addressed. Furthermore, she stated:

Teachers were instructed to refer to the student as male and use the new designated name of choice. I check with the student through the school year to see how things are going, we talk about any concerns that need to be addressed.

The second scenario described accessible accommodations provided for transgendered students.

For example, faculty has given up some bathrooms for transgendered students. They have locking capacity and may also be used to change clothing for physical education classes. The students know we were trying to provide an understanding atmosphere as we work and support them.

Claire, the bilingual lead teacher, revisited a personal story concerning mistaking a transgendered student for a non-transgendered student. After calling the female student by a male name:

I felt very awkward but felt a need to correct and apologize for my error. Near the end of the class, I spoke to the student and apologized. The apology was accepted,

and we eventually greeted each other verbally with a smile for the remainder of the year.

The levels of professional practice went above and beyond the normal expectations of some educational leaders. The BEL participants detailed a broad spectrum of practices and experiences that were presented in the various administrative positions. Additionally, the study participants frequently described a duality of experience as they related to cultural awareness. They implied they frequently acted as cultural agents who contended with cultural incongruences, practices, beliefs, and values from their colleagues while working with marginalized students. The BEL participants empathized with the culturally diverse students and their families. For example, when dealing with students who were diverse and spoke a language other than English, they considered how respect, reciprocity, and understanding are demonstrated within a diverse student's cultural backgrounds. Briefly stated, lack of cultural awareness on behalf of BEL participants' peers and colleagues continued existing in educational settings regardless of geographical locations. Yet, the BEL study participants continued operating from a color-conscious perspective, which appeared embedded in their cultural values, beliefs, and traditions, and it exemplifies their ability to stretch their unique leadership practices as they worked with marginalized students.

BEL's accessibility as a resource for students. Demonstrations of accessibility appeared in self-reflection as noted by several of the BEL participants as they worked in their various IRSSs. The BEL provided noteworthy practices and experiences as they related to their personal availability and obtaining opportunities for improving students' educational knowledge bases. Edward recalled the lack of any BEL mentors as his career

developed. As he reflected on another occasion with a male student having some sexual orientation concerns and the student's parent, Edward described a scenario:

This conference did two things for me; one, it made me think and question myself, "am I actually opening myself up to be a role model to this kid?" "Am I treating all kids the same as a suburban educator or treating some a little bit differently?"

Additionally, Edward questioned and realized the importance of his professional practices and experiences as a BEL: "It also made me think about how I could take advantage of these opportunities to assist student overall development, especially since I may have been the only Black administrator some of these students had in their entire K-12 experience." As a BEL, Edward began to review his moral and ethical responsibilities as a social justice educational leader, he described his personal accessibility to students, "It also made me think differently, even in my current role, how do I go about advertising to kids that being a resource for them is an option, and I am there for the taking without them feeling awkward."

Sara also discussed self-reflection and her personal accessibility as it impacted her development as BEL. She told of a White, middle-aged female teacher who approached her during a professional development conference. Sara described the following conversation:

I must tell you that I believe I was the first African American administrator some individuals encountered in their profession. A middle-aged, White woman stated, "You are the first African American I have known on a personal level other than just to say hi and goodbye."

When further discussing her practices and experiences, Sara indicated the continual personal need to evaluate and compare her responsibilities as an effective BEL. She discussed the character and quality of her professional practices:

I definitely feel my practices are different, because I've had some time to examine my own personal biases. My position is very different from my colleagues because of my heritage as a Black person, which gives me a more in-depth understanding of various students' differences.

Barbara expressed another viewpoint of her experiences as she reflected on her role in starting a girls group in her building. Most of all, she expounded upon students knowing that, "I'm there for them!" Additionally, she reported,

I've actually started a girls' group so that I can try to have more of a positive impact on a smaller group of female students. However, it's interesting how the group materialized, because this girls' group was open to every girl in the building."

On the contrary, the group consisted of primarily of:

Girls of color, which was not the original plan. It was supposed to be a girls' group to promote girl power and respect for girls and young women; it ended up being a large group of minority girls. I'm okay with that.

From a distinctive perspective, Barbara claimed the purpose and relevance of establishing the girls' group. The experience provided a unique personal practice and demonstrated a positive undertaking. "I have an opportunity to have influence on young Black women, and I feel I can draw upon my history as a Black woman and try to influence and have a positive change on these young Black girls' lives."

Some educational programs may provide accessible learning opportunities for some students in various educational settings. On the other hand, some of the study participants reported the importance of seeking educational learning opportunities in schools as well as seeking learning opportunities outside of the school environment. Additionally, cultural experiences shared by BEL participants and marginalized students potentially created a connection that enabled the BEL to reflect on their responsibilities as moral and ethical leaders while working with students. The BEL participants' personal and professional experiences and practices often guided all students to accessible educational pathways while opening educational opportunities for marginalized students.

Chapter Summary

In summary, there were three major themes. The first theme was entitled, student advocacy as a Black educational leadership social justice practice. This theme discussed perceptions of BEL's social justice educational leadership as they incorporated advocacy for marginalized students. There were two subthemes, including self-advocacy as a learning tool for students, teachers, and parents; and Black educational leaders confront stereotypical patterns. Each subtheme further described advocacy. The participants' viewpoints presented individual administrative leadership practices and experiences within changing IRSS contexts. The BEL participants described the challenges they personally encountered as underrepresented educational leaders who advocated for inclusivity for marginalized students.

The second theme was entitled, conceptualizing equity practices – one size does not fit all students. The responses centered on demonstrations of equity practiced and experienced by the BEL participants as they worked with marginalized students. Their

social justice educational leadership styles were characterized by consistency and fairness. The BEL's cultural consciousness, acceptance, and sensitivity toward individual student behavioral patterns illustrated their social justice educational leadership perspectives. Personal and professional insights experienced by the BEL participants surfaced and were investigated as they related to marginalized students.

The third and final theme was entitled, providing accessibility to various educational opportunities and experiences. One subtheme was investigated, and it included BEL's accessibility as a resource for students. This reflective subtheme articulated a personal opportunity for the BEL participants to fill a void as they acted as a visible role models for all students. The BEL recognized the need for marginalized students to experience opportunities beyond the traditional educational settings. Preparation for adulthood undergirded the rationale for self-improvement and educational experiences suggested by BEL participants who practiced social justice educational leadership. The BEL provided educational channels for broadening marginalized students' individual knowledge bases within schools and the greater community.

Chapter 5 provides a more extensive summary of the findings. Additionally, implications and recommendations for future research are presented as well as the study limitations.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the themes that materialized from the research regarding the social justice educational practices and experiences of Black educational leaders as they worked with marginalized students within in demographically changing IRSS contexts. The three emergent themes included: *student advocacy as a Black educational leadership social justice practice, conceptualizing equity practices – a one size does not fit all students, and providing accessibility to various educational opportunities and experiences*. Furthermore, as demographic patterns in the United States change, so does the need for changes in educational policies and practices. Social justice educational leadership practices of BEL suggest possible strategies beneficial for marginalized student populations located in IRSS contexts.

The primary research question for this study was: *In what ways do Black educational leaders demonstrate social justice educational leadership in demographically changing inner-ring suburban school contexts in Western New York?* This question was investigated due to the limited research literature available regarding Black educational leaders who have had experiences and practices within changing demographic IRSS contexts as it relates to social justice educational leadership. Finally, this chapter presents limitations and recommendations to be deliberated. Research for this study used a qualitative methodology and employed a phenomenological approach to the research question (Creswell, 2007, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldana, 2016).

Discussion of Findings

Student advocacy as a Black educational leadership social justice practice.

Anyone can advocate for students; however, advocacy is a major characteristic embedded in Black educators' social justice educational leadership practices. The importance of advocating for students presents as a risk-taking experience (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Tillman, 2004). Yet, dedicated committed Black educators frequently step up and advocate for marginalized students (Lomotey, 1987; Randolph & Sanders, 2011; Siddle Walker, 2004). Demonstrations of advocacy by Black educational leaders include speaking up in various situations, writing letters to parents, as well as protesting students' placements as BEL confront social injustice. Black educational leaders act on their feelings of empathy, duty, and obligation to encourage, strengthen, and educationally direct marginalized students. Operating from an insider perspective BEL, frequently bear witness to peers who lack cultural awareness and who fail to recognize their own personal biases, which frequently creates a limited, color-blind view of marginalized students (Evans, 2007a; Khalifa et al., 2016; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Wilson, 2009). Furthermore, geographical location appears irrelevant based on the findings of this study.

Advocacy, framed by the study participants, expresses an individual's willingness to identify beliefs, practices, and policies that appear inappropriate as they relate to marginalized students due to race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and/or disability. The Black educational leaders interviewed, reported experiences of offensive insensitive verbiage or actions as they attempted to reveal and eradicate negativity related to their students. Briefly stated, Black educational leaders seek to

enlighten their colleagues to different ways of supporting all students regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and/or disability.

On the other hand, from a professional and personal experience, Black educational leaders who incorporate social justice leadership practices advocate for others as well as themselves. For example, in this study, the participants reported experiencing a sense of devaluation or being overlooked and even being “put down” during interactions with their peers. They also experienced students, teachers, and parents benefiting from advocacy practices as the BEL encouraged verbalizing concerns in various educational settings. The importance of understanding BEL’s philosophical beliefs, values, and cultural experiences often proves as an asset when working with individual faculty from other cultures. Furthermore, the cultural backgrounds of many Black educational leaders included various forms of discrimination, which impacted their worldviews and made them more race conscious. Understanding the relational experiences and barriers presented by discrimination may mitigate negative projected stereotypical platforms encountered by individuals of African descent.

Color blindness conceals many stereotypical behaviors that permit many students, teachers, and parents to deny their own personal biases while they continue operating without acknowledging obvious cultural differences of students. The BEL in this research study operated within a color-conscious perspective. Because of their personal marginalized experiences, they continued to see the color-blind perspectives perpetuated with many marginalized students, teachers, and parents. Yet, the Black educational leaders continued to constantly advocate for marginalized students, teachers, and parents, in an attempt to confront the prevailing color-blind perspectives. This study presents a

different perspective as it relates to advocacy and the importance of incorporating practices based on BEL social justice educational leadership experiences, which have the capacity to transform overall educational leadership.

Conceptualizing equity practices – One size does not fit all students. Equity implies a consistent infusion of fairness and quality into the lives of individual students, particularly marginalized students. Within an educational setting, many students experience marginalization due to race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and/or disability. Additionally, Black educational leaders in this study empathized with marginalized students and their individualized needs because of their personal experiences (Alston, 2012; Evans, 2007a; Horsford, 2010; Tillman, 2002, 2006). Subsequently, Black educational leaders strive to demonstrate equitable practices in several ways.

Research indicates the importance of educators incorporating different instructional practices to accommodate individual students' learning styles. Additionally, various behavioral patterns of students may also impact students' learning capacity (Irvine, 1989; Larson & Murtadha, 2003; Randolph & Sanders, 2011; Theoharis, 2007). Failure to consider individuality among students can lead to isolation in educational settings and even placement in restrictive special education classes. However, utilizing the students' social capital and respecting their diverse background enables BEL to approach instruction from various perspectives (Orr, 1999). Furthermore, the concept of equity, as demonstrated by Black educational leaders' practices, include interpersonal care, respect, recognition, and empathy, and they may strengthen overall social justice

educational leadership practices (Bondy & Ross, 2008; Siddle Walker, 2002, 2004, 2014; Siddle Walker & Sneary, 2004).

The BEL in this study had a similar shared cultural knowledge base, including their values, beliefs, collective mindsets, and experiences, which allowed them to better understand the importance of differing cultural constructs (Horsford, 2010, 2014; Lomotey, 1992, 1989, 1987; Randolph & Sanders, 2011; Tillman, 2002). Additionally, cultural perspectives and connections to an often-shared history lend themselves to a thorough understanding of marginalized students' development. Cultural values, beliefs, customs, and practices undergird relationships that often link the BEL to marginalized students. Furthermore, visibility as well as interpersonal relationships frequently connect Black educational leaders to some students. Using culturally relevant teaching practices enhances overall instructional delivery and provides opportunities for academic growth for students who experience marginalization while benefiting all students (Ladson Billings, 1995; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Tyler, 2016). Yet, many of the study participants found that incorporating or exploring new teaching practices and strategies remained an untapped resource in many inner-ring suburban school districts. Furthermore, the study participants reported that the lack of incorporating diverse teaching strategies into curriculum depletes academic achievement for many students.

Other practices employed by Black educational leaders in this study suggest the relevancy of data as it impacts equity and fairness in instructional teaching and learning for students and faculty. The participants reported data usage as a developmental strategy permitted individualized and appropriate student placement when properly analyzed by willing faculty. Yet, specific diverse data strategies, whether negative or positive,

continued as relevant factors displayed in some inner-ring suburban school districts. The study participants further acknowledged that faculty willing to buy into data use can develop a connection to the different student needs and incorporate an objective educational path for more of the student body, regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and/or disability.

Equity, as a key construct of social justice educational leadership, has remained an uncovered practice that has been employed by Black educational social justice leaders. However, the BEL in this study addressed the attributes aligned with equity and demonstrated that Black educational leaders emphasize the importance of further acquisition by larger educational leadership practice. Moreover, equity as practiced by Black educational social justice leaders' demands warranting if marginalized students are to make academic improvement (Alston, 2012; Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Evans, 2007a; Horsford, 2010; Khalifa et al., 2016; Tillman, 2002, 2006).

Providing accessibility to various educational opportunities and experiences.

Accessibility, the final tenet of social justice educational leadership, investigated the Black educational leaders' exploration and use of additional resources beyond the average inner-ring suburban school day as they related to marginalized students. The study participants reported that students, parents, and teachers collaborated at times for the purpose of academic growth of marginalized students. Resources included entry into apprenticeship programs, shadowing experiences, and extracurricular activities. The students exposed to new learning ventures often found their abilities as a learner increased, and they enhanced their academic development. Furthermore, the study participants described partnering with various community agencies that provided school

supplies and products for students to use while seeking to improve their skills as they grew into adulthood. The importance of demonstrations of accessible practices by BEL established a broader educational setting, which enabled the students to fully experience productive academics.

Within inner-ring suburban schools, the study participants further described provisions for accessibility to various educational opportunities and experiences. The BEL provided changes in students' schedules and modified school days to allow some marginalized students to develop their self-improvement skills as they matured. Additionally, facility repurposing demonstrated a desire to accommodate marginalized students and their specific needs. For example, repurposing building facilities such as bathrooms to accommodate different sexually oriented students removed an obstacle, which allowed some marginalized students accessibility where none previously existed. Challenges faced by BEL also included some community agents who saw no need to provide any adjustments for marginalized students. However, demonstrations of accommodation for marginalized students at times posed problems for the BEL from community constituents, yet the BEL pursued and considered the individual needs of specific students. Simply stated, the study participants knew their students' specific individual needs.

As social justice educational leaders, the BEL's philosophical perspectives of morals, ethical beliefs, and practices acted as an impetus as they constantly worked to access flexible avenues for marginalized students regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and/or disability. On the other hand, Black educational leaders encountered a limited numbers of students who were placed in

accelerated courses. Many students were recommended or placed in special education programs due to behavioral issues. Incremental, behavior-based classes often overlooked the significance of the students' cultural capital and discouraged the importance of lifelong learning. As these concerns appeared, study participants questioned the educational settings and sought opportunities outside of the typical classroom and school to ensure additional academic development for students.

The study participants referred to their personal experiences as they related to accessibility within educational parameters. Expounding on a shared historical background, which included discrimination, enabled BEL to reflect on stories regarding lack of accessibility. Memories reflected few, if any, visible mentors existed in their overall schooling and professional development. Furthermore, personal and professional development was limited outside of church and fraternal organizations, such as sororities and fraternities (Randolph & Sanders, 2011; Siddle Walker & Byas, 2009). A sense of urgency emerged as the study participants considered the need to expose the untapped potential of marginalized students.

The study participants who operated from a social justice educational leadership perspective went the extra mile (Khalifa et al., 2016; Siddle Walker, 2001). They embraced their practices, while systematically locating opportunities which would balance the school curriculum with reality as they related to marginalized students. Moreover, Black educational leaders' demonstrations of commitment and dedication included finding opportunities and real-life experiences within the local community and beyond for marginalized students (Siddle Walker, 2004). The study participants

recognized the need to appreciate each student as a unique individual, regardless of their race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation or disability.

Implications of the Findings

Specific findings from this study highlighted BEL's social justice educational insights into advocacy, equity, and accessibility as they relate to students who are marginalized due to race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and/or disability (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002; Evans, 2007b; Hernandez et al., 2014; Horsford, 2010, 2014; Kouzes and Posner, 2007; Ladson Billings, 1995, 2004; Larson & Murtadha, 2003; Lomotey, 1993; Randolph & Sanders, 2011; Siddle Walker, 2013; Siddle Walker & Archung, 2003; Siddle Walker & Sneary, 2004; Theoharis, 2007; 2007; Tillman, 2002, 2004, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). This study suggests the importance of incorporating the educational practices of BEL as they engage students in the educational process, which is intended to improve students' individual learning. Furthermore, the experiences of Black Educational leaders shed light on experiential encounters from a phenomenological approach to a worldview of a specific cultural group of individuals (Creswell, 2007, 2009; Saldana, 2016).

This research study extends Theoharis's (2007) social justice research, which included the concepts of advocacy, equity, and accessibility, and the impact on underrepresented and historically marginalized students in educational settings. Additionally, this study pushed the concepts of advocacy, equity, and accessibility, which were neglected by Theoharis concerning three major constructs. Furthermore, this study investigated and gives voice to the social justice educational leadership practices and

experiences of Black educational leaders as they impact marginalized students in rapidly changing demographic IRSS contexts.

Implications of this study's findings are addressed within three major constructs. The first construct implicated is the way Black educational leaders developed a sense of social justice educational leadership. The second construct of this study's findings are implicated in how educational leaders demonstrate their sense of social justice educational leadership. The third construct implicated by the study's findings stressed the importance of race and culture as they impact social justice educational leadership.

Ways BEL develop social justice educational leadership. This study discussed the ways BEL develop a sense of social justice educational leadership. The Black educational leaders developed a sense of social justice educational leadership from their individual educational philosophies, which often included their personal beliefs, values, and customs as Black educators growing to maturity in the United States of America. Furthermore, the BEL sense of social justice educational leadership also stemmed from their historical backgrounds and their abilities to reach into their personal and professional life experiences of marginalization. They recognized the importance of advocacy, equity, and accessibility as a social educational leadership practices within historical and contemporary educational settings, including rapidly changing demographic inner-ring suburban school contexts. Furthermore, having endured marginalization in many ways enabled the BEL to establish a connection with students who had been marginalized due to race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and/or disability.

To accomplish inclusionary educational procedures, the BEL developed trusting relationships with students and their parents (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 2002.; Randolph & Sanders, 2011; Siddle Walker & Sneary, 2004). Their relationships were based on interpersonal care, empathy, self-assurance, and confidence in the marginalized students (Horsford, 2010; Lomoyey, 1993; Siddle Walker, 2000). Additionally, in order to strengthen bonds with students, the BEL realized the need to welcome and embrace diverse sociocultural perspectives of marginalized students. Simply stated, BEL knew and believed in the potential of their students who were marginalized due to race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and/or disability (Hillyard, 1992; Khalifa et al., 2006). Furthermore, as limited numbers of BEL work in IRSS contexts, their sense and demonstration of social justice educational leadership continued to focus on the students' individual academic needs (Evans, 2007a; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Tyler, 2016 Wilson, 2009). Ultimately, the BEL's practices and experiences of advocacy, equity, and accessibility are beneficial for students who are marginalized due to race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and/or disability.

How BEL demonstrate social justice educational leadership. The second construct implicated by this study illustrates how BEL implemented and placed into action of social justice educational leadership. BEL demonstrated their social justice educational leadership practices through advocacy, equity and accessibility in several ways. For example, BEL interacted with parents and often became a trusted voice of frustration and neglect in school and community meetings regarding their children's individual needs. BEL responded to individual students and their specific educational needs by spending additional time with students who often have been marginalized due to

race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation and disability. BEL engaged their students in the educational processes intended to improve students' individual learning in different ways.

The BEL also responded to individual students and their specific educational needs by providing consistently fair academic programs for the students. This type of commitment indicated their concern and interpersonal care for their students' well-being. Furthermore, the BEL recognized, respected, and supported the individual needs of their students as they made accommodations for individual student schedules and modified academic programs for students who were marginalized due to race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and/or disability. Teachers who continually use outdated pedagogical strategies, which exclude the sociocultural capital brought to schools from differing students' perspectives, were confronted by the BEL. Though the BEL risked retribution from some teachers and colleagues, they continued stressing the importance of utilizing various cultural techniques to address the individual learning styles of students who were marginalized.

Confronting stereotypical behaviors and actions by colleagues was often attributed to lack of cultural awareness on behalf of other adults such as teachers, parents, and peers. An example of negative behaviors experienced by the BEL occurred when their competency levels were questioned. BEL's knowledgeable interpretations of educational leadership and insights were ignored, and they were considered irrelevant. Yet, the BEL forged ahead and attributed the behaviors and actions of other educators as limiting and needing professional development.

The importance of race and culture in social justice educational leadership.

The third construct addressed by this study implicates the importance of race and culture as they impact social justice educational leadership. Exclusion of cultural beliefs, values, and customs appears to be an oversight in the research of Theoharis (2007). Therefore, reconsideration of racial and cultural beliefs, values, and customs identified in this study is warranted as they relate to Black educational social justice educational leadership practices and experience. Cultural values, beliefs, customs, and practices undergird relationships between BEL and marginalized students. Cultural perspectives and connections to an often-shared history contribute to a broader understanding and development of students who are marginalized due to race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and/or disability.

Furthermore, this study revealed that culturally relevant teaching practices enrich overall instructional delivery and present opportunities for academic growth for marginalized students (Ladson Bill, 1995; Madsen & Mabokela, 2014; Tyler, 2016). Untapped resources, such as pertinent culturally relevant teaching strategies, were lacking in the IRSS context. There is a failure to incorporate culturally relevant teaching practices into curriculum-diminished academic progress for marginalized students; for example, the exclusion of an obvious factor, such as race, has limited all students' abilities to accept many cultural differences, and it denies the realities of other sociocultural existences. As visible representations of accomplishment, the BEL fostered a sense of success for marginalized students.

Given that race, a significant construct, was overlooked within Theoharis's (2007) social justice education framework, the findings of this study suggest race must be

considered in educational leadership. Black educational leaders realize and interpret race from a very different perspective. While many educators continually see “color” as irrelevant and operate from a color-blind perspective, Black educational leaders seek to emphasize and operate within a color-conscious perspective. Race has permeated sociocultural perceptions and continues to be a deficit-based construct that hinders and potentially destroys educational progress and development for all students, particularly students who have been marginalized due to race, ethnicity, class, gender, language sexual orientation, and/or disability.

Study Limitations

A limitation of this study concerns the original research design. This study was designed to involve Black school principals and assistant principals. However, statistical data from various district report cards indicated there was a lack of Black individuals in the positions of school principals and assistant principals. The data dictated the study design to be expanded to include counselors and lead teachers. The counselors were noted in the data referring to inner-ring suburban schools. Subsequently, the study was extended to incorporate individuals recognized by school principals as capable of performing various administrative duties such as lead teachers. The research design also was limited to four of six possible inner-ring suburbs. Investigating the remaining two suburbs may have provided additional insights of Black educational social justice educational leaders’ experiences and practices. However, according to a district report, there appeared to be no Black Educational leaders within the other two inner-ring suburban schools.

Recommendations

Based on this study's findings, Black educational leaders have a unique sense of social justice educational practice and experience. Their skills and abilities, if incorporated into existing leadership practices, can provide a more comprehensive educational leadership perspective. The BEL in this study developed trusting relationships with the students as well as their parents. Additionally, they welcomed and embraced different sociocultural perspectives. As demographic patterns continue to shift in the US, incorporating the skills and abilities of BEL are critical qualities needed in educational leadership. Black educational leaders realize the potential of students regardless of their marginalized status. School districts must ensure future educators will be amenable and prepared for changes that can improve academic delivery in changing student bodies.

Demographic figures from the U.S. Census Bureau for 2000-2010 reflect national trends regarding specific changes nationwide (Frey, 2012). Additionally, socio-economic patterns change as do levels of poverty, housing, income, unemployment rates, health conditions, and housing patterns, which are equally impacted (Kneebone & Reeves, 2016). Briefly stated, as populations move among various inner-ring suburban locations, schools experience changing student body configurations. Differing student body populations need to be addressed through a lens of diversification. Educational leaders need to have a sense of social justice educational leadership to meet the needs of the changing student populations.

This study indicates that the majority of the study participants came from the teacher ranks, and they eventually entered into administrative positions. Inner-ring

suburban school districts must look within their existing teacher ranks for potential individuals capable of serving as administrators. Given the limited numbers and difficulty of acquiring the BEL for this study, it is recommended that school districts begin to rapidly recruit from the Black teacher ranks in an attempt to garner, locate, and employ potential Black educational leaders. Moreover, there is an urgent need to build a cadre of future educational leaders who have practices and experiences grounded in social justice educational leadership. Furthermore, opportunities such as professional development, mentoring may create and sustain social justice educational leadership for future SJEL educators.

This study could be expanded to include other phenomenon from other underrepresented groups of students and educators who live and work in other inner-ring suburban school districts across the nation. As the United States' population continues to increase and becomes more mobile, an examination of population shifts, and community needs will be impacted. School districts and community policy makers will have to be prepared for new and different challenges when planning for all citizens. Moreover, a similar qualitative study could yield information, insights, and protocols as they relate to all educational leaders' practices. Educators entering educational leadership programs at the college level need to be exposed to social justice educational leadership theory and practices.

Increasing the number of qualitative studies referring to social justice educational leadership allows the realities of other underrepresented populations to become more inclusive. The voices of parents and teachers working together in demographically changing inner-ring suburban schools may offer extensive information and provide

untapped resources in educational settings as it relates to social justice educational leadership. A schools' overall culture may become more inclusive and comprehensive by establishing accessible formats for professional development and reaching out to include parent and teacher input.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research study extended the framework of social justice educational leadership as presented by Theoharis (2007). Social justice educational leadership incorporates advocacy, equity, and accessibility as main ideological tenets. This research study investigated and centered on advocacy, equity, and accessibility through the social justice educational leadership experiences and practices of BEL within rapidly changing inner-ring suburban school contexts. Inner-ring suburbs are adjacent to large cities and are experiencing shifts in demographic patterns which impact school districts (Berube & Frey, 2002; Evans, 2007a; Frey, 2015; Hanlon, 2008; Kneebone & Reeves, 2014 Lee & Leigh, 2005, 2007; Puentes & Warren, 2006; Weise, 2004). The impact of these changing demographics is relevant within the emergent study themes.

The emerging research themes included student advocacy as a black educational leadership social justice practice, conceptualizing equity practices – one size does not fit all students, and providing accessibility to various educational opportunities and experiences. The data collected was provided from Black educational leaders' experiential worldviews using demographic profile sheets, field notes, and individual interviews (Creswell, 2007, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldana, 2016). The study participants included current or former building level school principals, assistant principals, counselors, and principal-designated individuals who were capable of

performing administrative duties such as lead teachers. The majority of the participants in this study hailed from positions of PK-12 teachers where they operated as social justice educators. Their teaching experiences focused on teaching students in various academic areas including English, math, history, science, and languages. The participants brought over 150 years of social justice educational practices and experience to the emergent three themes in this research study.

The BEL's clear personal insights regarding their work within inner-ring suburban school contexts conveyed comprehensive views of individual students and their individual educational needs, particularly with students who were marginalized due to race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, and/or disability. By extending the social justice educational leadership work of Theoharis (2007), three specific constructs surfaced from the study findings. The three constructs related to the BEL's social justice educational leadership practices and experiences within changing demographic inner-ring suburban school contexts and expressed in ways that BEL:

1. develop a sense of social justice educational leadership,
2. demonstrate their sense of social justice educational leadership, and
3. recognize the importance of race and culture as they impact social justice educational leadership

This study suggests the importance of incorporating social justice educational leadership practices by BEL as they engage students in the educational process to improve marginalized students' learning. Moreover, the experiences of Black educational leaders shed light on experiential encounters from the worldview of a specific cultural group of individuals. This study sought to narrow a gap in educational leadership

research literature while contributing to the field of educational leadership as it pertains to social justice educational leadership. Furthermore, within the 21st century, educational leaders need to be prepared to adeptly work across racial/ethnic and socio-economic groups and in various professional settings. This can be accomplished if diversity among student populations is led by social justice educational leaders who recognize the impact of diversity upon student development (Gay, 2013; Khalifa et al., 2016; Madsen & Mabokela 2014; Tyler, 2016).

Finally, the overall field of educational leadership, in general, can learn from the practices and experiences of Black educational social justice educational leaders. As overall educational leadership undertakes social justice educational challenges and commitments, we must move beyond the basic tenets of advocacy, equity, and accessibility. Consideration of this study's findings which include the ways BEL make sense of social justice educational leadership, how BEL demonstrate social justice educational leadership, and the importance of race and culture must all be incorporated into social justice educational leadership. As demonstrated in historical and contemporary research literature, Black educational leaders lead to improve systems and individual lives.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Letter Requesting Participant Recommendations

Greetings,

Date

I am writing to request your assistance with my current research project. I am currently a doctoral candidate in the Executive Leadership Program at St. John Fisher College. I am required to research and investigate a specific topic of interest. The topic of my research is:

Black Educational Leaders Social Justice Educational Practices and Experiences

Within Demographically Changing Inner-ring Suburban School Contexts

The focus will be on the practices and perspectives of Black educational leader's social justice leadership practices in public inner-ring suburban school contexts. During the study, I will conduct one individual interview of 60-90 minutes with each participant, which will be audio tape recorded and transcribed for participant review and analysis. All participants will have a pseudonym for confidentiality purposes and all transcribed information will be shared with each participant individually for additional clarification of their understanding. My study is voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time without being questioned about their withdrawal decision. Furthermore, all information collected will be secured in a researcher office in a locked file cabinet and destroyed after three years from the project completion.

At this time, I am requesting your assistance in aiding me to obtain seven to ten study participants. If you know of potential Black educational leaders inclusive of

principals, assistant principals, and educators performing administrative duties such as counselors and lead teachers who have experience in suburban district which border our city, please encourage them to take part in my study. Please have the potential study participants contact me as follows: cell _____ or email _____.

Thank you for your assistance in this scholarly endeavor.

Respectively,

A. B. Rodriguez

Appendix B

Letter to Potential Participants

Greetings,

Date

I am writing to request your assistance with my current research project. I am currently a doctoral candidate in the Executive Leadership Program at St. John Fisher College. I am required to research and investigate a specific topic of interest. The topic of my research is Black Educational Leaders Social Justice Educational Practices and Experiences within Demographically Changing Inner-ring Suburban School Contexts.

The focus will be on the practices and perspectives of Black educational leader's social justice leadership practices in demographically changing inner-ring suburban school contexts. During the study, I will conduct one individual interview of 60-90 minutes with each participant, which will be audio-taped and transcribed for participant review and analysis. Participants may also be asked to partake in a brief (20 minutes) follow up interview in the immediate weeks after the initial interview. Participants may choose to refuse to answer any question at any time during the interview.

All participants will select a pseudonym for confidentiality purposes and all transcribed information will be shared with each participant individually for additional clarification. My study is voluntary, and participants may withdraw at any time without being questioned about their withdrawal decision. All interviews will be transcribed to assist in the analysis process.

I am requesting your assistance in aiding me to obtain seven to ten (N=10) study participants. If you know of potential Black educational leaders inclusive of principals, assistant principals, and educators performing administrative duties such as counselors and principal designated lead teachers who have experience in suburban districts which border our city, please encourage them to take part in my study.

Please have potential study participants contact me via cell, _____, or, email _____. Thank you for your assistance in this scholarly endeavor.

Sincerely,

A. B. Rodriguez

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

Title of the study: Black Educational Leaders: Social Justice Educational Practices and Experiences within Demographically Changed Inner-ring Suburban School Contexts

Name of Researcher: Anna Bibbs Rodriguez (_____)

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Jeannine Dingus-Eason

Phone for additional information: _____

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate Black educational leaders' social justice educational leadership practices as they work with marginalized students within a demographically changing inner-ring suburban school context. This study seeks to understand Black educational leaders (BEL) with inner-ring suburban experiences, specifically examining their interpretations of social justice theory in descriptions of their work.

Place of study: A city in Western New York.

Length of participation: 60-90-minute individual interview and a brief follow-up interview (20 minutes)

Description of participation: Your participation in this study will include an individual interview, a brief follow-up interview, and completion of a demographic profile sheet. Additionally, your participation in the individual interview is voluntary and you may opt out of the study at any time or refuse to answer any questions.

Risks and benefits: The expected risks and benefits of participation in this study are minimal. Such minimal risks include revelations of negative emotions regarding work related stress. The probability of harm or discomfort anticipated in this research is not greater, in and of itself, than those risks ordinarily encountered in daily life or during a routine psychological examination or test. There is no personal benefit from participation in this study, but the knowledge received may be of value to humanity.

Disposition of Data: Individual interviews will be conducted by the researcher. All data collected during individual interviews will be professionally transcribed. Participants will be identified by self-selected pseudonyms for themselves and those related to their workplaces. Data including interview transcripts, researcher field notes, demographic

profile sheet, hand signed consent forms, etc. will be secured in a locked filing cabinet and a password protected computer. The researcher will store all information for three years from the conclusion of the study. After this, all materials will be securely disposed of in accordance with IRB guidelines and St. John Fisher College policies and procedures.

Dissemination of Research: Participants will be provided with copies of transcripts. Dissemination in local, regional, national or international conferences via paper or poster presentation may occur with all data being presented in aggregate form only and no individual identifiers. Data collection will be ongoing over a period of one year. Research findings will be prepared for publication in research journals and conference presentations.

Your rights: As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to you.
5. Be informed of the results of the study.

I have read the above, received a copy of this form, and I agree to participate in the above-named study.

Print name (Participant)

Signature

_____ Date _____

Print name (Investigator)

Signature _____ Date _____

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher listed above. If you experience emotional or physical discomfort due to participation in this study, please contact your health care or service provider for appropriate referrals.

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of St. John Fisher College has reviewed this project. For any concerns regarding this study and/or if you experience any physical or emotional discomfort, you can contact Jill Rathbun by phone at _____ or by email at: _____.

Appendix D

Demographic Profile Sheet

Pseudonym:

Administrative title(s):

Date:

This sheet is divided into Part A and Part B. Responses to Part A require a brief reply.

Responses to Part B require a Yes or No reply.

Part A

1. What is your highest level of education? _____
 - a. Undergraduate Degree _____(year) _____
 - b. Graduate Degree _____(year) _____
 - c. Master's Degree _____(year) _____
 - d. Other Degree _____(year) _____

2. How long have/had you worked in your current suburban institution?

From _____ To _____

Part B

1. Did you begin your educational career as a teacher? Yes No
2. Did you begin your educational career as a counselor? Yes No
3. Have you worked in various school districts? Yes No
4. Have you worked as an administrator in an elementary school? Yes No

a. Rural b. Urban c. Suburban d. Other

5. Have you worked as an administrator in a middle school? Yes No

a. Rural b. Urban c. Suburban d. Other

6. Have you worked as an administrator in a high school? Yes No

a. Rural b. Urban c. Suburban d. Other Yes No

7. Do you have aspirations of moving to moving to a different administrative
position in education? Yes No

8. Do you live in the district in which you work? Yes No

Appendix E

Interviewer Protocol and Interview Questions – Creswell (2009)

Face to face introductions – Welcome _____ (participant’s pseudonym).

Thank you for taking your valuable time to participate in my study.

Again, I want to reintroduce myself – I am Anna B. Rodriguez.

Do you have any questions regarding the Informed Consent Form? Researcher replies as needed.

A procedural outline will be reviewed with study participants and used by the researcher during participant interviews. The outline will initially be used as an Ice Breaker and address any participant questions regarding the Demographic Profile Sheet and Informed Consent Form. For example – How did you come to this district considering most Black educational leaders work in urban schools? The form used for data collection will be shared with the participant and will contain data relevant to the study such as the date, location of the interview, pseudonym of participant, researcher name as well as a start and stop time. Additionally, questions will be numbered; the participant verbal responses and the audio tapes will be analyzed as the study progresses.

Interview Questions

1. What does your administrative position entail? For example, your duties, responsibilities, etc.

2. Tell me about the ways being a Black educational leader informs your work when interacting with students, parents and faculty. In other words, how are your practices different your White peers or counterparts?
3. How have student demographics changed during you time in this building / district?
How have these changes compared to our previous administrative placements?
4. Are there any educational practices in this building that you would alter? Why? How would you change them?
5. Do you incorporate practices of advocacy, equity and accessibility in your role as an educational leader? How so, explain please.