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DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS IN ARIZONA SUBURBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS AND PRINCIPALS' SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

This study investigated principals' social justice leadership in two Arizona suburban public elementary schools (SPES) undergoing increases in minority students, decreases in white students, increases in child poverty, and increases in achievement gaps. A social justice (SJ) conceptual framework guided this qualitative multiple case study and overarching question: How is principals' social justice leadership perceived and practiced in SPES undergoing demographic shifts in students' diversity? A principal and six K-5 teachers participated at each school. Analysis of interviews, observations, and documents revealed how principals approached students' social and educational inequalities while trying to maintain A+ Schools. Findings showed: principals lacked SJ consciousness yet used SJ principles; child poverty and poor academic preparation trumped race concerns; principals appealed for more resources; and neither training nor experiences prepared participants for change.

INTRODUCTION

In Arizona suburban public elementary schools (SPES), at the beginning of the 21st Century, statistics on shifts in students' demographic diversity embody fundamental social and educational changes and introduce inequalities that challenge principals' leadership practices (Cooper, 2009; Evans, 2007; Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012). The demographic shifts are far-reaching, with increases in children of color, decreases in white children, increases in child poverty, and increases in achievement gaps that endanger some SPES A+ performance ratings (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010; Freeman, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Furthermore, owing to changing school boundaries, more low-income white children are part of the suburban schools and some white children residing in the districts over years fell from the middle-class, owing to an historic economic downturn (Synder & Dillow, 2012). Unfortunately, the state of Arizona support of public school services and resource capacities are becoming increasingly limited and the economic funding base for suburban public schools are even threatened by the phenomenon of having more white adults than white children in the Arizona population (Frey, 2010). The traditional homogeneity of white educators accustomed to the suburban advantage of homogeneous students, schools, and middle class communities are not prepared for the demographic changes (Rury & Saatcioglu, 2011). The reality is that suburban school districts do not have plans, policies, or professional development for educators geared to address the rising student diversity and ensuing educational disparities (American Psychological Association, 2012). These are but a few of the complex factors that challenge principal leadership practices.

The research literature to date has yet to examine how suburban public elementary public school (SPES) principals are responding to demographic shifts, or examine the factors that shape principal leadership practices in working with teachers to effectively educate more diverse students. In this study a social justice conceptual framework from a political philosophy perspective guided the examination of how principals and teachers perceived the principals' social justice leadership practices. The research is a part of a larger qualitative multiple case study (Ruich, 2013). The schools were located in Arizona suburban districts on opposite sides of a major urban city. The data included document analysis, observations, and in-depth interviews of a principal and six teachers at each school.

The literature review highlights a number of limitations to the research. First, research on principals' social justice leadership practice has been largely restricted to poor, urban, and desegregated schools. Second, research on demographic shifts in suburban schools has neglected to examine social justice as a theory and practice to address the educational inequalities and disparities faced by the least advantaged students. Third, research on suburban schools as a whole has mostly neglected to examine how predominantly white principals and teachers' perceptions of social justice affect the crucial role they are expected to play as mediators of the learning process for the growing student diversity. As a consequence, limited research has been done in the suburban context to understand factors that may contribute to the interpretation principals and teachers have of their shared roles in tackling education inequalities and providing a fair equality of opportunity (Cooper, 2009; Evans, 2007; Holme, Diem, & Welton, 2013).

Arizona Demographic Shifts

Arizona has experienced significant demographic shifts with a population growth of approximately 25% from 2000 to 2010. People of color make up 42% of Arizona's population with 30% Hispanic or Latino[1] residents. The shifting race and ethnicity composition in Arizona reflects a major demographic divide between people of color and whites across Arizona's age spectrum. Hispanics outnumber whites in the two youngest age groups of 0 to 4 and 5 to 9. While the median age of white population is 43, it is only 26 among Latinos (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Whites account for over half of the state's population ages 35 and older and account for at least 80 percent of those in elderly age categories. This contributed to a minority white child population and caused a "cultural generation gap" between white children and white adults. Arizona had the largest gap with 41% white child population and 63% white adult population in the United States (Frey, 2010).

Arizona placed fifth in the U.S. as the number of children under 10 years old increased by 18% from 2000 to 2010. Concurrently, Arizona slipped from 46th to 47th place among states in 2011 for the well-being of its children on a variety of measures including poverty, education (e.g., 67% of 3-and 4-year olds did not attend preschool and state funds were cut for full-day kindergarten), health, family and community factors (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013). The two most populated urban cities in Arizona registered 27% and 25% of children living in concentrated poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The racial and ethnic patterns of children in poor families differed across age ranges in Arizona (Cauthen & Fass, 2008). These children represent the growing least advantaged in Arizona.

Suburbia: In suburban areas, ethnic minorities and people of two or more races increased from 3% to 8%. Minorities were 35% of suburban residents, similar to their share of the overall U.S. population (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010; U.S. Census Bureau, 2010; Frey, 2010). Between 2000 and 2010, the number of poor people in suburbs surpassed the number in cities. As a result, demographers noted a shift in the spatial landscape of poverty rising in some of the suburban schools (Freeman, 2010). The statistics were twice the percentages of students in city and town schools (Snyder & Dillow, 2012). Orfield (2002) stated, "In region after region, problems associated exclusively with central cities in the national psyche have moved into the inner-ring suburbs" (p. 7). In Arizona, between 2000 and 2011 outside one urban city, suburban communities in poverty climbed 134% owing to the economic woes of the recession, housing bust, and unemployment. Like the West in general, many Arizona parents, even with some college completion, experienced more increases in unemployment leading to greater increases in poverty (Douglas-Hall & Koball, 2006). This condition extended widely into Arizona suburban schools that recorded 31% of students were eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch in 2000-2001 to 47.3% in 2009-2010 (Synder & Dillow, 2012).

Demographic diversity and poverty in suburban school districts within the same metropolitan area may differ and some may have lost their identity of being high

[1]The terms "Latino" and "Hispanic" are used interchangeably in this paper.

performing schools in homogeneous affluent neighborhoods (Frankenberg, 2012; Hall & Lee, 2010; Murphy, 2007). Reardon, Yun, and Chmielewski (2012) contended that we understand relatively little about the rapid suburbanization of minority populations, increases in poverty, threats to school achievement, and the challenges for educators. Frankenberg and Orfield (2012) noted that, "demographic shifts often receive little public attention, except among teachers who experience them daily and feel that they have scant support or resources to effectively meet the challenges" (p. 3).

Suburban Schools' Struggles with Demographic Shifts

Evans (2007) presented insight on how suburban high schools in different districts adversely approached demographic changes of increases in black students. The key findings were that educators used a deficit-oriented framework, adopted a colorblind ideology, and resisted change. Holme, Diem, and Welton (2013) examined how leaders of one large suburban school district in Texas responded to demographic shifts. Participants included district level administrators and educators across three schools, two elementary and one high school. Researchers found that the district's response to demographic shifts focused intensely on technical and political changes in curriculum, instruction, and resources to address the needs of low-income students and students of color. A key outcome "was that the district's approach became essentially an effort to pursue a 'separate but equal' strategy to demographic change" (p. 27). In another study, Young, Madsen, and Young (2010) examined administrators' perceptions of their ability to implement diversity plans in a demographically changing suburban/rural school district. The study found that although administrators were aware of diversity needs, they reluctantly moved in the direction to satisfy the overall objective of embracing diversity district-wide. The bottleneck was their inability to comprehend the intricacies of implementing diversity plans at individual schools.

These studies highlighted the leadership struggles suburban schools faced with diversity of students' demographic shifts. The struggles were introduced by tensions of suburban advantage and an exceptionalism mindset; color-blind and silence ideologies; and, disregard for the value of emergent diversity (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Delpit, 1988; Tarca, 2005). In short, even with the recognition of these struggles, there was little clear discernment of principals' social justice practices to meet the needs of the least advantaged students.

Social Justice Education Leadership

Furman (2003) suggested that "social justice has recently acquired a new intensity and urgency in education for several reasons, including the growing diversity of school populations" (p. 5). Cooper (2009) argued that as the new diversity of the United States increases, so do the challenges of meeting the needs of all public school students. She argued for transformative and ethical school leadership for social justice in which leaders view students' demographic diversity as not threatening or deviant, but enriching and educative. Resh (2010) asserted that when social justice is the goal for all students, "Education is a distinct sphere of justice where resources are rewards, educational goods are being constantly distributed, and the fairness of their allocation is being evaluated,

eliciting a sense of justice or injustice among the evaluators" (p. 313). According to Shields (2004), principals for social justice overcome the silence surrounding ethnicity and social class by creating an awareness of the benefits and risks for students. However, Karpinski and Lugg (2006) warned, "A social justice approach is a striking departure from historic administrative practice in public schools because it acknowledges that public schools can and frequently do reproduce societal inequities. For decades, administrators were blinded to the inequities that public schools were institutionalizing and reproducing" (pp. 279-280).

In urban, inner-city, low socioeconomic, and failing schools, a preponderance of research explains how principals practice social justice leadership and use an equity orientation to lead schools, influence teachers' pedagogy, and create positive school climates and cultures. These principals continuously meet the challenges of student demographic diversity, culture, language, intergenerational poverty, segregation, and the achievement gaps (Banks et al., 2011; Darling-Hammond, 2002; Delpit, 1995; Evans, 2007; Nieto, 2004; Riehl, 2000; Tatum, 2007; Trueba, 2002; Theoharis, 2008).

Many educational scholars have tackled the importance of addressing equity and justice in K–12 schools (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Lalas, 2007; Nieto, 2004; Oakes & Lipton, 2003; Sleeter, 2001; Villegas & Lucas, 2002); some researchers have analyzed the strategies for preparing school personnel, including school leaders (Marshall & Oliva, 2006; McKenzie et al., 2008; Miller & Martin, 2014) and school counselors (Bemak & Chung, 2005; Constantine & Yeh, 2001) to promote social justice and equity in schools; and other researchers have suggested models for social justice in classrooms, yet debates are ongoing about an appropriate meaning of social justice leadership in education (Gewirtz, 1998; North, 2006; Theoharris, 2009). Constructively, North (2006) identifies social justice central tensions related to theorists' emphases on redistribution or recognition, sameness of difference, and differentiating macro- and micro-level forces.

In terms of researcher's pursuit of social justice governance at the state and school district levels, the focus has been on equal education opportunity through school desegregation, diversity plans, school finance reform, social policy, and school choice (Fusarelli, 2011). Yet, scholars have not approached the subject of social justice in suburban public schools experiencing shifts in students' demographic diversity unrelated to desegregation or integration policies or initiatives.

This study suggests that as shifts in demographic diversity occur in SPES, it is important to explore principals' practices in making equal and equitable education opportunities fully available to all students, particularly the least advantaged. When speaking of educational equality, it means equal distribution of opportunity, that is, "everyone gets shoes." When speaking of educational equity, it is a fair distribution of resources in which "everyone gets shoes that fit" (e.g., individual educational plan).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study drew from political philosophy and articulates the usage of selective core concepts, tenets, and theory of justice. Foundational to the conceptual framework are selected principles of John Rawls (2001), specifically the "difference principle", dealing with the "least advantaged" and fair equality of opportunity. Additionally, consideration is given to Rawls's background ideas to enact the difference principle, such as moral capacities of a sense of justice and a sense of the

good, primary goods, and by extension, the Capabilities Approach of human rights and development, as advocated by Martha Nussbaum (2001) and Amartya Sen (2006). Primary goods are "a person's expectations for life prospects", but capabilities takes them a step further and are "what people are actually able to do and to be" (Nussbaum, 2011; Rawls, 2001; Sen, 2009; Walker 2005).

According to Rawls, "the difference principle expresses its fundamental meaning from the standpoint of social justice" (Rawls, 1971, p. 106). He notes the tendency to equality with the difference principle by stating, "The principle holds that in order to treat all persons equally, to provide genuine equality of opportunity, society must give more attention to those with fewer native assets and to those born into less favorable social positions (Rawls, 1971, p. 100). Rawls asserted, "The idea is to redress the bias of contingencies in the direction of equality" (pp.100-102) by pursuing the difference principle through fair equality of opportunity, such as embodied in schooling experiences. He also stated:

> In pursuit of this principle greater resources might be spent on the education …say the earlier years of school. The difference principle would allocate resources in education, say, so as to improve the long-term expectation of the least favored. And in making this decision, the value of education should not be assessed solely in terms of economic efficiency and social welfare. Equally if not more important is the role of education in enabling a person to enjoy the culture of his [and her] society and to take part in the affairs, and in this way to provide each individual a secure sense of his [and her] own worth (pp. 100 – 101).

Wenar (2013) expounded on the functioning of the difference principle in education at the administrator and policy levels of the school district and stated:

> For fair equality of opportunity Rawls emphasizes that laws and policies must go beyond merely preventing discrimination in education. To ensure fair opportunity regardless of social class of origin, the state must also fund high-quality education for the less well off (p. 36).

As far as using political philosophy to guide educational research, Moses (2002) argued that philosophy as educational research deals with controversial educational issues. She contended that philosophy presents clear conceptual frameworks that aid in the examination of educational policy and practice. As an example, Moses pointed to Nel Noddings' (2005, 2012) engagement in philosophy of education and research using a social justice framework on the "ethics of caring" with attention to the least advantaged. A number of scholars support an ethics of caring and a community of ethics approach, derived broadly in terms of relationships and experiences in which people are being receptive and attentive to students, teaching and learning within families, welfare, schooling policy, and community (Furman, 2003; Nussbaum, 2001). Hence, coordinated principal leadership and teacher instruction ought to start with caring about children and their learning under what Rawls call a "scheme, which the least advantaged are better off than they are under any other scheme" (Rawls, 2001, pp. 59-60). Noddings (2012) agreed

with this part of the "difference principle" in terms of how it focuses on inequalities and disparities in education for the least advantaged. She admits it is a sophisticated abstract theory difficult to apply to some real social and educational problems. However, Noddings (2012) declared that if people are not moved to care for and teach children facing observable education inequalities "simply upon hearing the story of their plight, it is doubtful that any argument will move them" (p. 186). For the purposes of this research, social justice in education is defined as "An individual's right to equal access to a equitable, fair, free, public, quality education, and instruction regardless of position, race, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, natural skills, abilities, and geographical location (Ruich, 2010). The definition has implications for principals' social justice leadership practices, similarly expressed by education scholars, as adopting an advocacy role and justice orientation towards attacking inequalities faced by students in coordination with teachers and others in order to deliver equitable and equality educational opportunities for all students, particularly the least advantaged.

The Study

This study's proposition is that shifts in students' demographic diversity in suburban public elementary schools will increase principals' perceptions of educational and social inequalities and influence their leadership practices to include social justice principles. The overarching research question is: How is principal leadership for social justice perceived and practiced in SPES undergoing demographic shifts in student diversity?

This study explores theory and practice and extends research on principal leadership for social justice. The significance of this research is that by exploring social justice leadership in Arizona SPES, where social justice is not openly discussed or thought of in terms of "social justice", findings can contribute to improving micro-politics of decisions, school practices, and professional development activities. In addition, findings can assist school leaders to better advocate to leverage local, state, and federal funding to educate all students, particularly the least advantaged.

Researcher Positionality

In conducting this research, the principal investigator (P.I. and first author) was a cultural insider owing to being a member of the same professional educational community in the same region of the state. In addition, P.I. and participants were all caucasian women. The P.I.'s similarity in gender and ethnicity and difference in social justice orientation did not appear to underscore the research effort.

METHODOLOGY

This study used Yin's (2009) multiple embedded case study replication design. The cases were of two K-5 suburban public elementary schools located in two different suburban K-12 districts on opposite sides of an Arizona metropolitan city. Each case's embedded units of analysis included demographic data on the: 1) school district, 2) school, and 3) principals and six K-5 grade teachers. Data was gathered from: (1) semi-structured interviews with principals and teachers, (2) observations of the principal, (3) follow-up interviews, and (4) document analysis. Data sources were triangulated and interpreted in the analysis to derive preliminary findings.

For inclusion in the case study, the schools met at least one of four student population dimensions of shifting student demographics along a population continuum from decreases to increases of at least 5% from 2006-2011 (Fry, 2009; Orfield, 2002).

Participants

A purposive sample was employed. Participants met the minimum requirements of working in their school for a minimum of 3 years. All participants self-identified as Caucasian or white, all were females, they ranged in age from 25-65 years old, and they worked in schools from 3-10+ years. In the first case (Cactus Wren Elementary school), the teachers worked at the school from 3-5 years and the principal served for 10+ years. In the second case (Mosaic Elementary school), five teachers worked at the school for 10+ years and one for 8 years. The principal served for 10+ years. All the participants had bachelor's degrees from public colleges and universities. At the two schools combined, the principals and four teachers possessed master's degrees. The participants were accustomed to the suburban advantages and unaccustomed to work introduced by the educational and social disparities inherent in student demographic changes.

Case Study One:

Cactus Unified School District and Cactus Wren Elementary School

Cactus Unified School District is in a suburb on the southeastern outer ring between an Arizona urban city and rural area. The district lies in a community considered middle-class by the U.S. Census Bureau (2010), with both established and new homes. The older schools were situated close to the outer ring of the major city, and the newer schools were positioned in the center of the community. According to the 2010 census, the community surrounding Cactus Unified School District had approximately 52,532 people. The population increased 46 percent from 2000 to 2010. School-age children represented 44.9 percent of the population. The ethnic breakdown of the suburban community was white, 70 percent; black, 3 percent; American Indian and Alaska Native, 1 percent; Asian, 2 percent; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, 0.1 percent; persons reporting two or more races, 2 percent; and Hispanic or Latino, 20 percent. There were approximately 16,573 housing units. Table 1 shows data on the percentages of student demographic shifts by race and free and reduce lunch at Cactus Wren Elementary School from 2006 to 2011.

Table 1 compares 2006 and 2011 student demographic data at Cactus Wren Elementary School including data on increases in students' free and reduce lunches.

Table 1
Student Demographic Shifts for Cactus Wren Elementary School from 2006 to 2011 (in percentages)

	2006	2011	Percentage change (+/–)
	(*n* = 790)	(*n* = 827)	
White	73	64	–9
Hispanic	19	25	+6
Asian or Pacific Islander	.03	.04	+.01
American Indian	.004	.005	+.001
Black	.04	.06	+.02
Free and reduced lunch	15.04	25.71	+10.67

Note: In 2006, Cactus Wren Elementary School had an enrollment of 790 students of whom 73 percent were white, 19 percent were Hispanic, .04 percent were black, and .004 percent were American Indian, and .03 percent were Asian or Pacific Islander. Of the enrolled students, 15.04 percent received free or reduced-price lunches. The demographics of Cactus Wren Elementary School was decidedly different than in 2011 with an enrollment of 827 students of whom 64 percent were white, 25 percent were Hispanic, .06 percent were black, .005 percent were American Indian, and .04 percent were Asian or Pacific Islander. Of the enrolled students, 25.71 percent received free or reduced-price lunches.

Case Study Two:

Painted Desert Unified School District and Mosaic Elementary School

Painted Desert Unified School District was located in the suburb on the northwestern outer ring of a major Arizona metropolitan city, between it and other suburban areas or rural areas in the county. The district consisted of a community that was considered upper-middle class by the U.S. Census Bureau, with both established and new homes. The older schools were situated close to the outer ring of the major city, and the newer schools were positioned next to rural areas or towns. The district was founded in 1893.

According to Snyder & Dillow (2012), the community surrounding Painted Desert Unified School District had approximately 139,206. The ethnic breakdown of the suburban community in which the district existed was white, 67 percent; black, 2 percent; American Indian and Alaska Native, 1 percent; Asian, 3 percent; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, 0 percent; persons reporting two or more races, 2 percent; Hispanic or Latino, 24 percent. There were approximately 33, 814 housing units. Table 2 provides data on the percentages of student demographic shifts by race and free and reduce lunch at Mosaic Elementary School from 2006 to 2011.

Table 2 compares 2006 and 2011 student demographic data at Mosaic Elementary School, including data on increases in students' free and reduced lunches.

Table 2
Student Demographic Shifts for Mosaic Elementary School from 2006 to 2011 (in percentages)

	2006	2011	Percentage change (+/–)
	(*n* = 717)	(*n* = 667)	
White	74.4	68.5	–5.9
Hispanic	16.6	21.8	+5.2
Asian or Pacific Islander	4.6	4.4	–.2
American Indian	0.7	0.3	–.4
Black	3.7	4.7	+.1
Free and reduced lunch	11	24	+13

Note: In 2006, Mosaic Elementary School had an enrollment of 717 students, of whom 74.4 percent were white, 16.6 percent were Hispanic, 3.7 percent were black, and 0.7 percent were American Indian, and 4.6 percent were Asian or Pacific Islander. Of the enrolled students, 11 percent received free or reduced-price lunches. The demographics of Mosaic Elementary School was decidedly different than in 2011 with an enrollment of 667 students of whom 68.5 percent were white, 21.8 percent were Hispanic, 4.7 percent were black, 0.3 percent were American Indian, and 4.4 percent were Asian or Pacific Islander. Of the enrolled students, 24 percent received free or reduced-price lunches.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

This research began with a systematic search and analysis of Arizona suburban schools' demographic data located in online search engines and websites for federal and state governments, think tanks, professional organizations, and school districts, including the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey, National Center for Educational Statistics, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Arizona State Department of Education, the Center for Public Education (National School Board Association), Pew Research Social and Demographic Trends, Pew Research Hispanic Center, and the Brookings Institute.

In consultation with school district officials, schools were identified and selected for the research. The districts and University granted Human Subjects approval and principals and teachers gave their informed consent. Pseudonyms were used for school districts, schools, and participants. The research took place over an eleven-month period, starting in August 2011 and ending in June 2012.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted at the participants' schools or a location of their preference. Interviews were recorded and transcribed to ensure accuracy of participants' responses. Observations took place at school meetings in which the topics included reviewing student statistics and data sets, discussing management issues, and considering principal and staff interactions in relation to leadership and pedagogy strategies. Document analysis included school meeting agendas, student data sources on

demographics, and archival data, such as attendance, enrollment, discipline, and academic assessments.

The validity of teacher and principal questionnaires was addressed through the use of multiple sources of evidence, triangulation, and use of feedback loops (Meyer, 2001). To address reliability, the case study protocol and documentation of the procedures were followed from the pilot study to the present study, and yielded reliable and consistent results (Yin, 2009).

The audio from the interviews of teachers and principals was transcribed using Dragon Naturally Speaking and data were organized using NVIVO. Researcher notes from interviews, observations, and documents were used as additional data sources. Transcriptions were read first for immersion in the data, then coded, and reread to identify emerging themes or patterns. Triangulation allowed the data sources to be viewed from multiple perspectives, cross-checked, and examined for regularities and differences in the data (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Yin, 2009). Triangulated data sources helped to map out details and produce a balanced picture of the cases. The final steps entailed interpreting the data and self-reflection of the analytical process (Seidman, 2006). Examining the data took place throughout the study and helped to explain the complexity of how participants perceived leadership and teaching in the changing demographics of schools.

Patterns Across-Cases. The embedded units within-cases provided data sources for analysis in order to describe each SPES case as related to the study's proposition and research questions (Eisenhardt, 1989). A search of patterns in data sources was conducted from across case analysis. Inductive and deductive approaches resulted in identifying repetitions, indigenous similarities, metaphors, similarities and differences, and emotional expressions. The interpretation of results was related to the proposition, research questions, and the conceptual framework in order to identify preliminary themes of critical consciousness, poverty trumped race, professional development, and advocacy for distribution of resources (Creswell et al., 2007; Eisenhardt, 1989; Stake 2006).

This multiple embedded case study used replication designed to collect research at different levels within the schools, while still treating the school as a single case study. Multiple case studies treat each case as a "whole study" (Yin, 2009, p. 54). As a design in structuring the cases, Eisenhardt's (1989) within-case analysis and search for patterns across-cases was used to present descriptive findings. The triangulation of the data sources guided interpretation of findings and emerging themes in connection with the study's proposition, research questions, and conceptual framework.

FINDINGS

Backed by confirming evidence supporting the research questions and keyed to the proposition, it was concluded that the shifts in students' demographic diversity at each school did increase principals' perceptions of students' educational and social disparities. That is, principals recognized new students' inequality of opportunity because of unequal distribution of "life chances" to attain educational readiness for school (Satz, 2012). Moreover, the tension between increases in child poverty and lack of sufficient school resources heightened the principals' perceptions of the impact of social inequalities on students' equality of educational opportunities. The tension was inextricably related to principals' efforts to maintain high performance schools.

Therefore, the premise of the first part of the proposition was partially supported because principals perceived not only students' educational and social disparities, but also the impact of inequalities on teachers, school resources, and the threats to the high performance rankings of the schools. The basic argument for why the proposition is partially supported is centered on the principals embracing duties to improve conditions of schools so they were more equitable. In addition, the principals' actions to address inequalities demonstrated a moral purpose, the ethics of caring and community, advocacy, a capacity for a sense of justice, and the conception of the good in educating students, particularly the least advantaged (Brown, 2004; Furman, 2012; Noddings, 2005; Rawls, 2001).

We believe that the principals' leadership practices were principally moral, in the sense they reconciled self-interest and a concern for students with the collective interest of teachers, school culture, district office, state, and national mandates. But here is the conundrum; while they clearly had concerns with structural issues of child poverty and students' educational inequalities, the principals' moral positions were not motivated by concerns for social justice. Also, what contributed to the proposition being only partially supported was the evidence from the data sources that showed principals did not perceive their leadership practices as being driven by a social justice consciousness, although their actions bears a resemblance to social justice practices. The teachers' perceptions at both schools corroborated principals' perceptions that social justice did not motivate principals' practices to address the needs of students. At both schools, teachers' perceptions were based on experiences with principals ranging for over three years, and beyond ten years, in some instances. It was noteworthy that all of the principals and teachers appeared uneasy when responding to the question on their knowledge and feelings about social justice in education. Most participants responded with a question in return that asked for our definition of social justice.

Principals and teachers associated social justice with social problems and social welfare tied to ethnicity/racial inequality in urban schools, border, and immigration issues, which is not something they normally encountered. According to Principal Davis, the issue with social justice in Arizona has to do largely with "Arizona-Mexico border types of things, such as the political climate and the acceptance of or not cultural diversity and second language issues." Principal Davis is unique in the fact that she was aware of these concerns and relayed them to her staff.

Nonetheless, their assumptions demonstrated levels of consciousness about social justice that were opposite of the continuous self-reflection that must be accompanied by critical consciousness and action to address social justice in the schools. By "critical consciousness," we are referring to the concept derived from Freire's (2000) process of *conscientisation*, a process in which a person becomes conscious of the ways of thinking about one's self in the world with others and transforms these ways of thinking to a new perspective. In our judgment, it embraces understanding sources of oppression and inequities faced by others and the realization of one's power to take individual actions to create conditions of equity and social justice to help one's self and others (Freire, 2000, 2008).

Therefore, the second premise of the proposition stating that inequalities would influence principals' social justice leadership with teachers to educate students was weakly supported. Our view is that principals did not perceive their actions as compelled

by social justice and teachers did not perceive principals using social justice as a means to influence their work with students. Overall, participants expressed reserved views, and shared having a lack of experience and knowledge about social justice. The data and our reflection suggest, nevertheless, that principals had a moral purpose and aimed at the good of the basic structure of the school by inspiring, working with, and organizing staff to establish and accomplish together equal opportunities of education for students, regardless of family income (Rawls, 2001).

After interpretation of the findings and theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study, we located themes that emerged consistently across the two cases. The themes naturally connoted the fundamental tenets examined and supported to a degree the proposition and research question. The key findings supported four interconnected themes:

1. Critical consciousness: Principals did not have a social justice consciousness driving their leadership practices, yet used social justice principles to address students' social and educational inequalities.

2. Poverty Trumped Race: Child poverty and poor academic preparation trumped participants' attention to students' race and ethnicity.

3. Professional Development: Neither training nor experiences prepared principals to deal with social and educational changes related to increases in students' demographic diversity.

4. Advocacy and distribution of resources: Advocacy role takes a variety of forms in different settings and at different times. In this study, it has come to mean helping students overcome inequalities of opportunity and condition by altering arrangements of school culture to promote healthy and secure environments for all students.

Theme 1: Critical consciousness

Principal leadership and teachers' instruction ought to provide equitable and fair equality of educational opportunities for an individual and all students yet arrange proper attention for the benefit of the least advantaged under what Rawls call a "scheme which the least advantaged are better off than they are under any other scheme" (Rawls, 2001, pp. 59–60). Noddings (2012) agreed with the difference principle is a way to caring for the least advantaged and addressing equality of opportunities for all students.

Our assumption is that educational leaders embracing care for children and the least advantaged demonstrate levels of critical consciousness and action to address social justice in the schools. Furthermore, given these tenets, educational leaders for social justice, no matter what type of education institution they work in, demonstrate a moral commitment to challenge the status quo, embrace diversity, commit to social change, redistribute resources, and maximize fair equality of educational opportunities for an individual and all students.

Patterns Across Cases

Student Needs. The conclusion that principals did not have a social justice consciousness driving their leadership practices recurred in both cases. The practices of both principals embodied several tenets of social justice without a perception of a social-justice consciousness. For example, the principals recognized the changing needs of students within and outside of school as a result of the shifting demographics. Principal Darling talked about fairness and unfairness surrounding educational opportunities for all students. At the same time, she reflected on parental rights and school obligations to educate the least advantaged. Her initial views were revealing and lacked a social justice awareness:

> They (special needs students) are part of our school, they go into the classrooms. Sometimes, do I think that's fair? No, I'm not sure it's fair to either party and again that's the law and sometimes parents, I'm not sure how would you feel if you were in those shoes [*sic*]? They want the best for their kids and they want them to be as normal as they can be, but also I have the other kids that I think of as well.

However, she went on to contend that every child should have equality of opportunities and when one witness's teachers providing equality of educational outcomes, one gains an appreciation of educating the least advantaged. She stated:

> So you know that's challenging, but I do believe that every child should have the opportunity to learn something [*sic*]. You know, I think it's interesting because I can look back over the years and I don't think I truly believed that until I became the administrator and was in the classroom and seeing what kids were doing that I really believe that now. I see little kids, where you might think it's a waste of time for them to be there, but when you see the light bulbs go off, the littlest things for them to do or that teacher and group of assistance that were part of that and so you helped them over that little hurdle where they can do something now.

Principal Darling appeared to have had mixed emotions regarding her belief in the idea of the greatest benefit of the least advantaged. Based on the quote above, it was evident that she knew how important it was for special education students to be in the general education classroom, though she also stated the possible disadvantages to those with the most benefit. We do believe from speaking with her and her teachers through interviews that she does *truly* have the students, all students, and their best interest at heart and was torn on how to make that happen in a way that best met the needs of all her students.

It is evident from her statements that Principal Darling did not consciously use social justice principles in her leadership practice to provide equality of educational opportunity for students, although she incorporated tenets, such as the benefit of the least advantaged, into her practices. Backed by confirming evidence, the same is true of Principal Davis.

According to her teachers, Principal Davis understands that there might be a student that you consider a challenge, or that to be quite honest, maybe you just don't like, but the expectation is that you treat that student and teach to that student the same that you would every other one. She also reasoned that caring for students and members of their family provided them a sense of belonging. Principal Davis encouraged and provided stipends to her staff to make home visits to their students once a year in order to understand where students come from and to gain intimate knowledge about the families' backgrounds.

Even with limited resources and pressures of state mandates, both principals addressed students' learning and social needs by putting systems and equitable academic programs in place (e.g., counseling and tutoring). They made concerted efforts to work with teachers and communities to provide equitable educational opportunities for all students. The principals confronted tensions of student needs while trying to maintain high performance ratings for their schools. The majority of participants in both schools noted the following educational challenges: funding, class size, demographic changes, lack of parent involvement, and a feeling of being overwhelmed. Despite these challenges and a lack of social justice consciousness, principals encouraged: collaboration among teachers, leveling (ability grouping), re-teaching and enriching[2], and other social-justice instruments (Ben's Bells, Project Wisdom, and the ACT[3] statement) to support the changing dynamics of the schools' cultures.

Teachers and Family Needs. The practices of both principals embodied several tenets of social justice without a perception of a social-justice consciousness in working with teachers and families as a result of the shifting demographics. The difference between approaches taken by Principal Davis and Principal Darling were slight and occurred as each made concerted efforts to work with district office, teachers, students, and programs on behalf of students. Some of the variations in their actions were due to the vagaries in the contexts of their schools, neighborhoods, and district.

Principal Davis approached teachers from a student-centered perspective. She voiced her support continually to her teachers, assuring them that she knew how hard they had been working and how frustrated they were with the lack of resources and shift in student demographics. Teachers had her full support, and Principal Davis was willing to help in any way possible; she reviewed the data with her teachers and offered advice when solicited and/or warranted. She also had high expectations that they would focus on moving each student forward. Teachers were expected to teach and reteach until all students, regardless of social and educational inequalities, reached 80 percent on formative assessments. Families were approached from a "collaborative" perspective. Principal Davis wanted them to know and feel that together they would support their children. She attended all family-centered events and encouraged parents to schedule a meeting with her if they had any concerns. Principal Davis approached community businesses from a "caring" perspective; one that invited them to help students stay on the

[2]The terms "Leveling", "reteach and enrich", and "Response to Intervention (RTI)" refer to programs used in the schools to address academic interventions.

[3]The terms "Ben's Bells", "Project Wisdom", and "ACT" refer to school-wide programs used to promote a positive school culture.

right track, as was evident by their posting the ACT statement in their windows and partnering with the school for various fundraisers. As a kindergarten teacher noted,

> It's a big deal and she's definitely a big part of that whole atmosphere. She knew which families did not have access to Internet services and provided hard copies of school newsletters to them. If a parent had a concern, he or she was able to make an appointment with her, and she listened objectively and was open to finding alternatives for the student. She believed that parents were sending us the best they have and want the best for their children, and that's what we're here to do in terms of serving students. I choose to use what could be seen as a deficit as a strength builder.

Both principals built relationships with students, staff, and families. Both were available and visible on campus and in the community. The difference in styles may be attributed to many factors, including personality, longevity of staff, and number of years in education.

Principal Darling approached teachers from a "personal" perspective. Due to her longevity and that of her staff, she knew them on a personal level and addressed them accordingly in the ways in which they work with students. Principal Darling and her staff had been through many educational initiatives and changes together. They knew what would have to be done to be in compliance and did so at their own pace. She rarely dictated to her staff what had to be done, and she never used the word "mandatory." Teachers' input was allowed, encouraged, and valued.

According to Mrs. Gordan, she was very active in making sure that teachers were provided trainings (i.e., leveling or RTI) they wanted and needed to be successful. She allowed her staff to process information at their own pace and at their own level. She was very good about protecting her staff and very careful about timing, as to when she asked them to do certain things. Principal Darling was very involved in the school and did not just sit in her office. She was in the cafeteria daily with the kids. She was out there greeting buses. She was high profile and knew everyone—students and staff alike—by name.

She had an open-door policy. Staff and parents felt free to poke their heads in and talk to her. She spent time with them, listening to their concerns and collaboratively developing plans to address those concerns. In addressing parents, Principal Darling did so from a "caring" perspective as she had families for several generations. She had built lasting relationships with many of her families, and they often would drop by without an appointment to discuss a concern or just to chat. She returned phone calls and preferred them to emails. She built relationships with families by making positive phone calls home when a student was rewarded academically or behaviorally. Principal Darling shared that parents often referred to Mosaic as Principal Darling's school. Grandparents returned to volunteer in classrooms as they felt a part of the school.

Principal Darling had many community business connections, since her husband was the CEO of the local Convention and Visitors Bureau. She used her connections to provide unique opportunities to her students. For example, as noted earlier, a local movie theater allowed her the use of their facility free of charge to hold a "Red Carpet Award"

ceremony for students. Students were honored as celebrities for doing their best in school.

Overall, the interpretative synthesis of data on the practices of both principals showed fundamental similarity in one regard and slight difference in the other. Both principals exhibited social justice practices (i.e., benefit of the least advantaged and caring) to reach all students' needs, despite a lack of social justice consciousness. They may have used different approaches in implementing those practices, yet the practices themselves were evident.

Theme 2: Poverty Trumped Race

The increase in child poverty and the effects on student academic and social achievement were discussed more often and openly than were the increases of race and ethnicity. In our discussions with teachers and principals and our observations, it was apparent that all participants found race and ethnicity difficult to discuss. As the number of white students in poverty increased, it was easier for the participants to discuss poverty issues while ignoring race and ethnicity. If race and ethnicity were brought up, it was in reference to having a colorblind ideology, as is noted by a statement from a 3rd grade teacher:

> Social justice to me is looking out at my classroom and not remembering which child is which color from which economic level. Showing them the same; not holding them with anything that says you can't possibly do that because you're a certain color or at a certain economic level. I guess accepting them, just as a person for me.

Patterns Across Cases

The principals and teachers at both schools voiced parallel concerns about what the demographic changes, specifically increases in student diversity, were doing to their schools. They judged that differences and problems associated with families, class, and to a much smaller degree, race and ethnicity, are consequences of the changing demographics. We wondered whether their perceptiveness came from inequalities experienced by families and children or was simply attributed to class difference. However, there was no indication that the principals or teachers had experiences with families and children representing the demographic changes or that the school districts were attending to ways of preparing the school personnel to address the needs of these families and children.

It appeared the principals and teachers were affected tremendously by the shifting demographic diversity, but also by some changes in the established families in the community in light of economic and family problems. Principals and teachers did not discuss experiencing social justice leadership, but they discussed experiencing and recognizing the increased needs of students and parents owing to demographic changes, socioeconomic downturn, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and family structure. The principals and teachers shared the experiences and awareness that suggested an addition

of a social-justice orientation toward providing equality of education opportunities and outcomes for all students.

A fourth-grade teacher who had been at the same school for twenty-two years summed up how the demographic changes have affected the classroom; with tears in her eyes, she commented:

> That's where the whole social service thing comes in. It really has less to do with, I don't want to say race, but descent, but has less to do with that than the family situations that exist. You know, I have one child in my room that is homeless at this time so you can't really expect this kid who's wondering where his next meal is going to come from to care about geography—I mean he doesn't probably doesn't even get enough sleep. So that's where I feel like in a Title I school, I think there's a whole lot more resources available for people like that who we have, but there's nothing, there's nothing for them. I mean you call the clothing bank and maybe the food bank. That's just one extreme case, but there are a bunch of kids who could really use some counseling and there are family situations that are just a mess. Trying to solve society's problems in a classroom, it's not possible and so many of the problems that we have is because of that. You know and parents are tired; they are overworked or don't have jobs and you know those kind of basic things is going to way overshadow you know, getting an education.

Family changes, student diversity, and lack of resources are a few of the challenges teachers and principals are dealing with in suburban public elementary schools, which do not have institutional mechanisms in place, as do Title 1 schools. Principal Davis commented on a change in which now over 50 percent of the houses within their boundaries were in foreclosure. She stated:

> This led to families and kids with much greater needs, in terms of, you know we try to serve free and reduced lunch and school supplies, just health and hygiene, insurance for kids, opportunity for mental health resources and so forth. With the increase of students with greater needs there has been a decline in academic background in the early years, in home and certainly in our area not as much consistency in terms of neighborhood and community focus, and families being involved.

Recognition of conditions (house foreclosures, need for free and reduced lunch, and so on) prompts leadership for social justice. The changes and impact on teaching were seen across all grade levels. A kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Daniel stated:

> The students this year have more problems at home and appear to bring those problems with them. It has impacted their learning and it has impacted growth because you have to deal with all those other things before you can get to the education. And because we're not a Title I school we don't get that extra funding, even though we have so many

> children who come from some terrible backgrounds that could really benefit.

Mrs. Daniel has seen much more violence and nastiness in kindergarten over the past three years. She attributed the problem to changing family structure, the lack of parent involvement, and lack of preschool. She believed that role modeling is a key component of the social and emotional teaching that happens as early as kindergarten with all students. Mrs. Evans, a 5th grade teacher, remarked:

> I see negative just because of the type of students, not students so much, but the families that have been moving in. It makes me sad. It really makes me sad, but we're getting a lot of poverty level families move in and unfortunately with that, it does bring in a lot of lack of motivation and a lack of involvement with my students.

Another teacher commented that her school was at 33 percent free or reduced lunches, a dramatic increase. Though she tried not to put down the lower socioeconomic students based on her own lived experiences, it is obvious that she negatively correlates students living in apartments to students on free and or reduced lunch. Mrs. Patrick stated:

> That it is a huge change, and a lot of that is because—and I lived in apartments too so I'm not trying to put them down—we have the big new complex and all the apartments that are on the main road by Target, so all of those kids come here, and that has made a big difference.

These perceptions paradoxically related to the inequities within SPES. All participants at some point throughout their interviews commented on the family situations, lack of family support, increase in poverty, and overall increase in student needs.

Theme 3: Professional Development

Professional development existed as it related to providing teachers with strategies to implement Leveling or RTI. It did not exist to provide teachers strategies for dealing with students' shifting demographics and the ensuing social and educational inequalities.

Patterns Across Cases

All participants made reference to the various professional development opportunities available in their respective districts or schools. Principal Darling provided in-service training prior to the start of the school year. She focused on collaboration and how to level students to best meet their academic needs. One teacher noted:

> Our principal has done a lot, she has us come in and do a long day of preplanning for the whole year, so we don't have to do that on the days

> that were a contract and by doing that she gives us a vision for the year and we work in groups and talk about what we're going to do and how we're going to do that. So it kind of sets the tone for the whole year with the organization.

Principal Darling's values and beliefs were well known and shared among her staff. She believed in providing students what they needed to succeed, whether it was a program, materials, resources, etc. Several teachers mentioned the programs surrounding teaching tolerance, acceptability, and kindness (i.e. Ben's Bells, Project Wisdom, no bullying, etc.) that she personally promotes daily on announcements and through her interactions with the students, staff, and community. Principal Darling's actions are an example of her incorporation of a moral purpose into her leadership practice.

Principal Davis supported the professional development of her teachers by providing leadership opportunities and the necessary professional development to be successful in their new leadership roles. She does not believe in purchasing a program for the sake of using the most current gimmick in education. She does believe in allowing her teachers the autonomy to be creative in developing curriculum and using teaching practices that best fit the needs of their students. In her interview, she stated:

> My belief is that we always need to be looking at best practices and ensuring that our teachers are fully trained and competent in best practices in terms of instructional delivery, mastery learning, and that if those things are occurring students are showing growth and/or were identifying why they're not and putting remedial programs in place and so my way of thinking is not that I don't care about the measurement, but I care more that all students are growing.

As evidenced by statements made by the principals and teachers in the interviews, both Principal Davis and Principal Darling focused on providing professional development surrounding academic preparation and strategies to address students' academic needs. They provided professional development for their staff on data analysis, creating assessments, grouping students for either enrichment or re-teaching. Professional development on social inequalities did not exist. Neither principal implemented or promoted culturally responsive curriculum or pedagogy. Nor did teachers mention needing any professional development on how to deal with the changing student demographics. This is not surprising, as they did not have a social justice consciousness.

Theme 4: Advocacy and Distribution of Resources

The advocacy role was one where the principal demonstrated a deep sensitivity to the needs of all students, but most especially, the needs of the least advantaged students (Marshall & Oliva, 2006; North, 2008; Rawls, 2001; Ryan, 2006; Shields, 2010; Theoharis, 2007). Both principals appeared to demonstrate sensitivity to the needs of the least advantaged students. Though they did not have a social justice consciousness or think in terms of social justice, principals and teachers did believe in providing equality of opportunity for all students. Principals and teachers voiced their concerns about

students' needs at the local and state level. For example, Principal Darling represented the area surrounding her district at the state level and visited the state once a quarter to advocate for students and staff in education.

Patterns Across Cases

Principal Davis noted that valuing diversity and truly learning about students and understanding their backgrounds and the needs they currently have are important to understand in order to care for all of them. Principal Davis created the mission of the school along with her staff to reflect the goal of providing every student the opportunity to grow academically, socially, and emotionally. When asked about advocating for social justice in the school, Principal Davis responded:

> Everything in my opinion revolves around the ACT statement: we are respectful, are trustworthy, care about each other, and take responsibility. So to advocate for those pieces is basically to advocate for social justice.

Principal Davis advocated for students in many ways. She was an activist for everyone on her campus. She embraced diversity and was known by teachers for her beliefs regarding equality and the acceptance of all types of people's backgrounds and viewpoints. She created an environment where school personnel and students could feel safe and have a sense of belonging. Principal Davis stated:

> I believe in education as a microcosm of social justice in the world or in our society; that it's a reality that unless people are really aware of acknowledging and valuing diversity and you know culture and ethnicity, etc. that there can be very, just very basic unacceptable decisions made to support a group or an ethnicity or economic situation; and to advocate for those pieces is basically to advocate for social justice.

She enlisted the help of the community in promoting the ACT statement and brought community members into the school in various roles to build relationships between them and the school. She built relationships with the community to bring additional resources into her school for staff, students, and their families.

Having been a part of her current school for the past eighteen years, Principal Darling knew the staff, the students, families, and the community. These relationships, built on all levels, gave Principal Darling insight into the needs of all groups. In reviewing the data on her and the teachers' perceptions, it was evident that Principal Darling was an advocate for students on her campus. She often reminded her staff that they were children, whether they were five, eight, or ten years old. Principal Darling believed in the children and that they come to school with the desire to learn and be accepted. She noted in her interview that:

> We have so many different programs here that we can take all kinds of kids. We even have a class called Choices for students who the next place is probably juvenile hall. They are emotionally disturbed kids who throw

> tantrums, throw chairs; you know it's really bad. They've hurt other kids and things like that. So I think that makes us an advocate for kids, for all kids, because we have so much to offer [*sic*].

As a result of the increased student diversity and varying needs of students, the staff at Mosaic elementary school, according to Mrs. Darling, became much more collaborative and embraced the fact that the students were all of theirs. The teachers leveled (ability grouped) within their grade level academically, which "has been huge because the teachers have to talk together, they have to work together, look at data, and decide what they need to do for the kids." Mrs. Darling stated:

> It doesn't matter who you are, we are here to educate you and to do what we have to do to help you; it doesn't matter race, religion, wherever you are on that learning spectrum. The school motto at Mosaic Elementary was "catching you doing those good deeds of kindness versus always looking at the negative."

The school incorporated the Ben's Bells program, which was all about the promotion of kindness. Its theme for the year was, "be kind, believe, and be the best you can be." Data confirmed recognition of changing demographics in student diversity and student ability. As a result, belief statements became more visible and important, staff collaborated and worked together, and social-justice leadership was practiced and relevant, but not necessarily recognized nor called by theory.

Both principals discussed the changing demographics at their schools and the impacts of the changes on students, teachers, and the culture of the school. The principals at both schools used social justice instruments (Ben's Bells, Project Wisdom, and the ACT statement) to support the changing dynamics of the school cultures, though they did not consider or call them social justice.

Principal Davis interacted with the staff in small groups or as a whole when addressing the changing demographics (i.e., data team meetings and RTI). Principal Darling preferred to meet with her teachers individually when discussing how to best meet the needs of the "new diverse" students. Principal Darling's door was always open, and she valued being accessible to her staff, students, and families. Both principals put systems and programs in place to advocate for students' academic and social educational opportunities.

DISCUSSION

Through the analysis of the data, interpretation of the findings, and our theoretical understanding of the phenomenon under study, the themes of *critical consciousness*, *poverty trumped race*, *professional development*, and *advocacy and distribution of resources* emerged as patterns and were interrelated across cases. They were not themes we were looking for, but they occurred and reoccurred in the analysis of the in-depth interview responses of participants and our observations. The patterns and themes emerged while addressing the proposition and research question; they were pervasive across both cases of principal practices; they were expressions of the way educators

operated in two different Arizona suburban public elementary schools; and they naturally connoted the fundamental tenets we investigated and described about principal leadership.

The research on the challenges of principal leadership and teaching associated with tensions to meet desegregation of suburban schools and high stakes testing is fairly new (Frankenberg & Orfield, 2012). The two Arizona elementary suburban schools in our case study, Cactus Wren and Mosaic, were not under desegregation orders; nonetheless, we were not surprised to hear principals and teachers describe the many ways that shifts in student demographic diversity and preservation of their high performing school caused tension. For example, the increases in student diversity placed additional stresses and pressures on principals and teachers as Arizona accountability stakes rose. One case exemplified this tension as four out of six teachers at Cactus Wren Elementary School expressed being overwhelmed with more student diversity, larger class sizes, increased level of curriculum rigor, inadequate resources, and a new State of Arizona teacher evaluation system with performance-base pay tied to Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards (AIMS). The teachers voiced concerns about being penalized by the new evaluation system for conditions they had no control, such as the increased student diversity, child poverty, and deficiencies in academic preparation. Teachers opined that the principal carried out her duties on behalf of students but also inferred that state policy on teacher evaluation were not sensitive to how the issue of shifts in students' demographic diversity presented new challenges. The fundamental social changes and educational challenges of shifting student diversity also exposed educators' concerns about how inadequate school resources undermined their abilities to do their jobs with integrity. We came to understand from the educators' narratives the nuanced ways in which the ongoing tensions spurred them to give every child a chance to succeed, even with a lack of resources and being in school districts that did not subscribe to an equity or equality initiative in their mission statements. The educators' efforts occurred in light of a lack of professional preparation, with no experiences involving a large number of ethnic minority children, low-academic performers, and families in poverty.

According to Rury and Saatcioglu (2011), the suburbs have been historically segregated by income, ethnicity, and other social characteristics contributing to the advantage of members within the communities (i.e., small class sizes, homogenous white and affluent students, social networks, abundant resources, etc.). What we found in the data was that over a period of years, veteran educators enjoyed suburban middle-class school advantages with a majority of white students, until they faced the challenging shift in students' demographic diversity. This was corroborated in a key, yet unexpected finding, which showed the complexity of shifting demographics that included changes to the socioeconomic status of white families and children living in both districts. First, some white families entered into poverty owing to the economic collapse in suburban neighborhoods (i.e., parents lost jobs and financial investments, some homes were foreclosed, and in order for students to stay in the district, some families doubled up in a house). Second, suburban schools' attendance boundaries changed to incorporate outer ring neighborhoods (some rural in one school) with more families living in poverty. These demographic changes introduced new educational and social inequalities experienced by families and contributed to the principals' understanding of the altered neighborhoods and educational needs of the least advantaged students.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to examine how principals and teachers perceived principals' social justice leadership in two Arizona schools that experienced shifts in students' demographic diversity, which represents fundamental social and educational changes at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Our analysis suggests that principals and teachers are in the profession for the right reason; they care about children and want their future filled with educational opportunities. Unbeknownst to some teachers and administrators, this represents a social justice orientation. If they could only see that even though social justice was not part of their critical consciousness and orientation, social justice was what they were performing to educate students, particularly the least advantaged.

Contemporary educational leadership theories (e.g., instructional, distributive) and practices provide principals with certain knowledge and skills that can be added to their leadership repertoire. We believe it is important that professional development programs in universities and schools include social justice leadership theory and practice to expand educational leaders' knowledge and skills, which will enable them to recognize changing demographics and address the challenges (upsurge of poverty, a rise in achievement gap, and a stable white teaching force) of this new and rising diverse student population that is entering suburban public schools. Professional development needs to start at the basic level, while introducing principals and teachers to a critical consciousness that specifically focuses on the meaning of a social justice consciousness.

We also recommend that educational programs teach principals how to observe teachers' practices in addressing a problem, such as shifting demographics, to determine their strengths and weaknesses and then develop the appropriate professional development based on individual needs, similar to what we expect teachers to do for students. Providing all teachers the same professional development is synonymous with providing all students the same education. Teachers and principals need professional development designed to meet their specific needs. In other words, they need professional development that fits; this being the same as students who need educational opportunities that fit their specific needs.

Under the conditions of shifting demographics, the idea that all children should have an equal chance had broad appeal to the educators who talked about ways for equalizing the contingent social and family circumstances that undermine a child's prospects in education. The inequality faced by the least advantaged students places pressures on schools to provide an equally valuable education that gives young students a rich set of academic skills and life options at future grade levels. Reconciling the perceptions of providing equal educational opportunities for all students while preserving or maintaining highly performing school status introduced new tensions and dilemmas for educators. The findings of this study suggest that educational equality is not easily reduced to the simple idea that each child should receive an equally good education (Brighouse & Swift, 2009). Instead, it crosses a number of dimensions and is sensitive to disagreement and debates over questions such as the role of the state, district, principal, and teachers, and the meaning of educational policies.

Evans (2007) believed that with demographic transformation, "although embedded within multiple, overlapping contexts and identities, school leaders could

confront old and engender new organizational ideologies that are socially, academically, and politically inclusive of all groups" (p. 185). Our research showed that principals did not have organizational support or mechanisms in place to address simultaneously the demographic transformations of overlapping contexts, conditions, and identities of families and children, such as affluent white families and children living in the district for a long time; white families and children falling from the middle-class into low SES and poverty; families and children of low SES and poverty living in residential areas newly incorporated into suburban school boundaries; and ethnic and racial minority families and children moving into the residential areas of the school district.

The findings suggest that the principals and teachers struggled to balance the tensions of these overlapping conditions and identities of children. The principals worried about students in poverty and those with minimal academic skills. The principals working with teachers acknowledged a need for more resources and they were aware that resources alone would not help them maintain high performing schools. Principals supported the teachers, yet the principals and teachers felt unsupported and powerless to formulate a coherent response to student diversity.

Motivated by the tensions, principals expanded their contemporary leadership practices that bear resemblance to social justice practices to influence teachers to meet the needs of their students. Nevertheless, we make this observation about principals with caution, since they did not perceive having a social justice consciousness or discuss the salience of race and ethnicity as part of the challenges with students' shifting demographic diversity and inequities. The absence of such discussion is curious because a striking feature of the demographic shifts showed racial minorities increased by 6 percent at Cactus Wren and 5.9 percent at Mosaic. At the same time, the percentage of white students declined by 11 percent at Cactus Wren and 5.9 percent at Mosaic. We describe principals' discounting the challenges of students' race and ethnicity as a kind of blindness, similar to the charges made by Karpinski and Lugg (2006) about public school administrators being blinded to inequities to avoid departing from historic administrative practices.

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