The Rough Road to Justice:
A Meta-analysis of the Barriers to Teaching and Leading for Social Justice

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Introduction

This paper centers on building an understanding about the barriers to teaching and leading for social justice. At this moment in history, as we recognize the 50th anniversary of the Brown v. Board of Education decision, it is essential to remember that as a nation we are failing to educate many of our most marginalized students - students of color, students with low-socio economic status, students who speak languages other than English, students with disabilities, and other students who have traditionally been excluded from the full benefits of an excellent public school. Freire (1990) proposed the purpose of our educational system is to make bold possibilities happen for these students. He stated that it is the work, in fact the duty of public education to end the oppression of these students. Fulfilling that duty remains an illusive challenge for many schools, teachers, and administrators. To fulfill the responsibility outlined by Freire to the education of marginalized students, it remains imperative to understand the historical, political, and educational barriers that exist to enacting this social justice. While individual pieces of scholarship refer to these barriers, a gap in the literature exists in that there is no review of themes across the research that discusses the barriers and difficult realities of working toward social justice. This paper addresses that gap.

Teaching for social justice is gaining in prominence in education. Evidence of this prominence is seen in the popularity of books like *Teaching for Social Justice* (Ayers, Hunt & Quinn, 1998), *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook*, (Adams, Bell & Griffin, 1997), *Learning to Teach for Social Justice* (Darling-Hammond, French & Garcia-Lopez, 2002), and *Because*
We Can Change the World: A Practical Guide to Building Cooperative, Inclusive Classroom Communities (Sapon-Shevin, 1999). While teachers for social justice affect change for students, they also encounter significant barriers in their work.

This paper will expand beyond the demands placed on all school leaders (Kinney, 2003; Langer & Boris-Schacter, 2003; Manasse, 1985; Peterson, 1982; Shields, Larocque, & Oberg, 2002; Strachan, 1997) and examine the barriers to social justice discussed specifically in the literature on leading for social justice. Recently, leading for social justice became an increasingly prominent topic of educational leadership inquiry. This is evident by a growing body of work on moving schools in the direction of equity (Capper, Keyes & Fraturra, 2000; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003) and on leadership for social justice (Brown, 2004b; Capper & Young, in press; Grogan 2002a, 2002b; Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Marshall, 2004b). This growing body of knowledge proposes that additional tensions and pressures exist for leaders who possess a drive for social justice. This paper will systematically examine the barriers to teaching and leading for social justice in public schools.

Defining Social Justice

Defining social justice becomes an instrumental component of this paper. Numerous scholars provide definitions of social justice (Blackmore, 2002; Bogotch, 2002; Gerwitz, 1998; Goldfarb & Grinberg, 2002). For this paper social justice is defined not in universal terms but in the realities of public school work, in that social justice means that these administrators and teachers advocate, lead and keep at the center of their practice and vision issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically marginalizing conditions in
the United States. This definition cannot be separate from inclusive practices for students with disabilities, English language learners, and other traditionally segregated students. Karagiannis, Stainback, and Stainback (1996) lay groundwork for this necessary connection between inclusion and social justice.

Theoretical Framework

As a researcher, I am coming to this meta-analysis paper proposal from a personal and academic situation that has been significantly influenced by feminist, postmodern and critical theories (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). These traditions maintain the beliefs that the world is complex, influenced by power relations and not necessarily empirically knowable. While the feminist and postmodern traditions have influenced this meta-analysis, this paper is grounded in critical theory (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Carspecken, 1996; Roman & Apple, 1990). To be clear about the assumptions made for this research endeavor, this work results from the activist need (Fine, 1994) to enact social justice in public schools and to help enlarge the body of scholarship focused on social justice and equity.

Research Question

In light of the omission in the literature detailing the struggle and difficulty in working toward justice, this meta-analysis addressed the following research question: What are the barriers to teaching and leading for social justice as described in the literature?

Research Methodology

To address the research question, I conducted a comprehensive review of the literature on teaching and leading for social justice. ERIC, Pro-quest, and Dissertation Abstracts International were culled over the past ten years, from
1994-2004. This search produced eight empirical studies on teaching for social justice, twelve empirical studies on leading for social justice, and ten theoretical works that added to the conversation on barriers to teaching and leading for social justice. In reviewing that literature, the constant-comparative method of data analysis was used for this meta-analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). The analysis compared themes across the existing literature on teaching and leading for social justice. The findings were reported thematically portraying the harsh and gritty realities that face teachers and leaders striving to achieve justice.

Findings

This meta-analysis focused on understanding the present day barriers to social justice. The barriers to teaching and leading social justice are described separately.

Barriers to Teaching for Social Justice

The first area of literature reviewed for this paper was the barriers to teaching for social justice. Teaching for social justice is central in creating just schools and an equitable society. Hunt (1998) provides a description of teaching for social justice:

Teaching for Social Justice is at the core of democratic education. It serves as a reminder not only of the inequities and biases that continue to wear away a the foundation of democratic values, but of the powerful stories which inspire us to work toward change, to make the world a better place. (p. xiii)
This teaching contributes to tremendous growth and deep thinking for the students involved. Ayers (1998) states “The fundamental message of the teacher for social justice is: You can change the world” (p. xvii).

To understand the barriers that teachers face in pursuing social justice in their classrooms, I examined eight empirical studies conducted over the past ten years. One significant barrier to teaching for social justice is that this work can upset those who benefit from the status quo (Allen, 1997; Darling-Hammond, 2002b; Lewison, Flint & Van Sluys, 2002). Both the content and the pedagogy involved in teaching for social justice seek to make clear the inequities found in society and additionally build new just norms for schools and communities. It takes courage and dedication for teachers to overcome the resistance by those who benefit from the way things are currently structured. Allen asserts that when teachers do not take up teaching social justice all students -privileged and marginalized - internalize norms of bias, prejudice and privilege.

This internalized oppression can limit students’ futures and cause them to believe in norms of deficit thinking (Valencia, 1997). Internalizing bias and the “common sense” of the status quo leads students to resist pedagogical content and activities associated with race, stereotypes, and multicultural curriculum.

In addition to internalized oppression of the status quo by some students, community and parent pressure can be a barrier to teaching for social justice (French, 2002; Gaudelli, 2001; Makler, 1994). Makler reports that teachers are wary of offending community groups and creating unrest/uneasiness with parents if the teachers purposefully bring justice issues into the classroom. Gaudelli describes a community backlash to the inclusion of certain topics in a
multicultural education high school class. In this case the parents involved the superintendent and director of instruction to question and challenge the content of this course. In addition some community members attacked the pedagogy and subject matter of the course. Though the course ultimately remained intact, Gaudelli (2001) discusses the problem with the elective nature of this multicultural course and socially just teaching in general: “It is important to reach out and involve those that might otherwise ignore such a course” (p. 37) but the reality is “you will be ‘preaching to the choir’ if the course is an elective. The vast majority of the students come in predisposed to accepting diversity” (p. 37).

Secondary schools that provide these classes keep them as electives and elementary schools often deal with justice as an individual teacher’s interest or special project. Learning about equity and diversity is constructed as outside the “essential” curriculum (Gaudelli, 2001; French, 2002). The fact that this type of teaching for social justice is an “elective” marginalizes this crucial learning about equity and diversity and further perpetuates injustice. French (2002) argues that the system of schooling, itself, (like in the Gaudelli discussion of electives) keeps issues of social justice out and is in turn a major barrier to teaching for social justice.

Gaudelli (2001) reports that time and resources are significant barriers to teaching for social justice. Because teacher materials for teaching social justice are not readily available from publishing companies (Moller, 2002), teachers need to take extensive amounts of time and energy creating lessons and curriculum (Gaudelli; Moller). The lack of teaching materials becomes a part of a vicious cycle. The system does not expect teaching for social justice, thus there
are limited resources available to use for the teaching. Because it takes such an incredible amount of time to create self-made curriculum, fewer teachers include this in the curriculum, which contributes to the system not changing to expect this type of teaching and learning.

Having the knowledge and commitment to justice is critical to teaching for social justice. Many teachers do not understand justice issues, do not want to engage in issues of race and inequity, and cannot picture what this kind of teaching and learning entails (Darling-Hammond, 2002a, 2002b; French, 2002; Lewison et al.; 2002; Makler; 1994; Moller, 2002). Scholars have found that even well-intentioned teachers do not necessarily understand the complexities of justice (Darling-Hammond; Lewison et al; Makler). Moller found that even effective teachers do not wish to examine their own understanding of race and potentially racist beliefs. According to Darling-Hammond (2002b) many teachers, since they are generally white and middle class, do not have personal experience with inequity and can be unaware of their privilege and societal discrimination. For some white teachers who have no personal experience with racism or discrimination but who are interested in equity and teaching for social justice, they question their abilities to teach and doubt that they can provide a sense of justice for students from different racial, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds (Traudt, 2002). Those teachers that do have the knowledge and skills to teach for justice feel isolated in this endeavor (French, 2002). After examining the literature, it is apparent that a variety of barriers to teaching for social justice exist and they are summarized in Table 1. These barriers contribute are similar to the barriers of leading for social justice that I discuss next.
Table 1

*Barriers to Teaching for Social Justice*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Supporting Literature</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opposition from those who benefit from the current</td>
<td>Allen (1997);</td>
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<td>state of education</td>
<td>Darling-Hammond, (2002);</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lewison, et al. (2002)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community and parent opposition</td>
<td>French, 2002; Gaudelli, 2001;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Makler, 1994</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internalized norms of bias, prejudice and privilege</td>
<td>Allen (1997); Gaudelli (2001)</td>
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<tr>
<td>in students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Systems in school that keep justice issues marginalized</td>
<td>French (2002); Gaudelli (2001)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of time and resources</td>
<td>Gaudelli (2001); Moller (2002)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers do not understand justice issues</td>
<td>Darling-Hammond (2002a, 2002b); French (2002); Lewison et al. (2002); Makler (1994) and Moller (2002)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Teachers do not know how to incorporate justice</td>
<td>Lewison et al. (2002); Makler (1994)</td>
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<td>issues into the curriculum</td>
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</table>
Barriers to Leading for Social Justice

The second area of literature culled in this meta-analysis was the barriers to leading for social justice. This section will conclude with a separate discussion of the lack of equity focus in administrator preparation programs. This lack of equity and justice focus was such a powerful and reoccurring theme requiring its own section.

The principalship is at best overwhelming in the number and variety of responsibilities. Peterson (1982) characterizes the daily work of principals with the descriptors of brevity, variety and fragmentation. Principals are engaged in diverse activities, are interrupted frequently by a variety of stakeholders and need to be able to speak quickly to a large range of issues and topics. The pace is fast and the daily interactions extremely varied (Peterson). Each day principals partake in “anywhere from 50 to 100 separate events and as many as 400 separate interactions” (Manasse, 1985, p. 140).

Within that daily work, principals need to lead their school toward improvement. Principals are regarded as essential figures in terms of school-wide change, priorities, and vision (Blackmore, 2002; Fullan, 1993; Riester, Pursch, & Skrla, 2002; Shields et al., 2002). Effective principals are the change agents, the champion of the school vision, and the key figures in setting and maintaining the school tone.

In a recent study of over two hundred principals from across the country, Langer and Boris-Schacter (2003) describe the tensions that principals face daily. First, they report great tension between the need for instructional leadership and the daily realities of managing a school. Second, they describe the tension placed
on principals between personal and professional demands. Finally, they explain the tension between the expectations they have for their position and the expectations of the larger community. These are considerable tensions and they are magnified by a context where principals workloads have increased dramatically and they are expected to do more work, more efficiently with fewer resources and less support (Kinney, 2003; Langer & Boris-Schacter, 2003; Marshall, 2004a; Shields et al., 2002; Strachan, 1997). Additional tensions and pressures exist for leaders who possess a drive for social justice. The literature provides an understanding of what some of those pressures are.

Oakes, Quartz, Ryan, & Lipton (2000) describe a major barrier to this social justice agenda is that “American schools have been pressured to preserve the status quo” (p. 573). The status quo has served to benefit the same students and families for hundreds of years, and has left out low-income, black, brown, native and Asian families (Apple, 1993; Delpit, 1995; Larson & Ovando, 2001, MacKinnon, 2000). In the studies of Oakes et al. and Perry (1997) communities that were zealously committed to the status quo forced out school leaders who were trying to make equity changes.

This status quo is built upon numerous assumptions and understandings that block the path toward justice. One of the major assumptions that the status quo is built upon is deficit thinking. Deficit thinking, which will be discussed in greater detail in the conceptual framework, is pervasive across school and communities. This view of children and families assumes difference – meaning not white, middle class/affluent and without disability – is deficient (Oakes, 1993; Shields, 2004; Valencia, 1997).
In addition to deficit thinking, educators seldom discuss issues of race (Bell, Jones, & Johnson, 2002; Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004; Solomon, 2002) or poverty (Lyman & Villani, 2002). School staff and communities that do not discuss the construction of race, poverty and disability maintain institutionalized inequity (Larson & Murtadha, 2002; Larson & Ovando, 2001). Not reflecting on or addressing these issues further perpetuates the safeguarding of the status quo. Even well intentioned educators are then allowed to keep their belief that skin color does not matter, that they do not see race, and that all children are the same to them (Bell et al., 2002). This denial forms a major barrier for a social justice oriented leader.

Perpetuating the status quo of the traditional view of leadership acts as another barrier to leading for justice. Brown (2004a) reported that ninety percent of educational leaders, administrators and professors, reaffirm the value of technical leadership over the moral and courageous leadership. This technical leadership fails,

To validate the cultural, intellectual, and emotional identities of people from underrepresented groups, they [technical leaders] avoid situations where their values (e.g. sexist, racist, classist, homophobic), leadership styles, and professional goals are challenged and dismantled, and they use their positions of power to formally and informally reaffirm their own professional choices. (Brown, p. 98)

National policies and societal attitudes often work against equity and social justice. One example is that many citizens have embraced the importance of high-stakes standardized tests. Children throughout their elementary, middle
and high school experience are required to take standardized assessments that have long-term consequences for both them and their school. Study after study and numerous scholars have argued that standardized tests are biased because they test knowledge and skills more likely to be obtained by privileged children (Bell et al., 2002; Kohn, 2000).

Connell (1993) states, “standardized assessments weed out the poor and legitimize the advantages of the privileged.” Bell et al. (2002) assert that this is partly because of tracking-like systems and “other hidden curriculum that block student access from more rigorous, challenging, and thought-provoking subjects and that silently communicate low expectations” (p.323). Our schools and national climate are dominated by a hegemony that controls the kinds of knowledge, the type of pedagogy, and access to information (Apple, 1993; MacKinnon, 2000). This hegemony in combination with high-stakes tests necessitates that “students who come to school to learn are not being judged [by standardized tests] on what they have learned, but what they didn’t know when they entered school” (Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001, p.9).

Negative community beliefs about schools with low test scores and people who work there (Oakes et al, 2000; Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001) are one consequence of the reliance on standardized testing. An additional consequence is that schools who do not perform well on these assessments struggle to attract and keep innovative and qualified teachers (Touchton & Acker-Hocevar). This reliance on high-stakes assessment further penalizes students from marginalized backgrounds and forms additional barriers for social justice oriented principals. This creates significant barriers to leading for social justice in that an inequitable
distribution of teacher quality exists. Skrla et al. (2004) argue that students from marginalized backgrounds experience higher teacher turnover and mobility and have teachers who have less training, certification, and experience.

Scheurich, Skrla, and Johnson (2000) agree with the data provided that the national reliance on standardized tests in the nation’s move to accountability systems can do great damage to students and to equity in schools. They also argue that there is data to show that accountability systems when thoughtfully done can improve schools for students of color and students living in poverty. Scheurich et al. conclude that we are at a point in history where these accountability systems and testing are a reality and “no, these systems will not end struggles for full racial equity in schooling. But the primary question with regard to these accountability systems must always be: In this historical moment, can we use them to truly improve equity?” (p. 299). Skrla et al. (2004) report that with No Child Left Behind legislations and the high stakes testing required, “There will be both positive and negative equity effects” (p. 136). While these testing and accountability systems create additional pressures to the social justice leader, it is important for leaders to keep the focus on equity, on learning how to use the system to create more equity and to not be overwhelmed by these accountability measures (Scheurich et al.). An additional barrier to leading for social justice that comes with this era of accountability and data, is with “growing amounts of comprehensive data about schools and districts, administrators and teachers” these educators and their school systems “do not have a clear, accurate, or useful understanding of inequity present in their own schools and school districts” (Skrla et al., p. 143).
A national climate of intolerance has influenced federal, state and local zero-tolerance policies that principals are expected to enforce. Zero-tolerance policies are ones in which there are immediate and often severe sanctions to any type of behavior that is deemed as unacceptable. Zero-tolerance policies can include guns, weapons, physical violence, dress code, and threatening speech. These policies state that if students are caught doing certain activities there is a set and immediate consequence, including suspension and expulsion. These policies enacted in the context of the uneven playing field described in the introduction and evidence of racial prejudice have a disproportionate negative affect on students of color and other marginalized students (Bell et al., 2002; Singleton, 2002-2003a). Mandates to enforce these policies put additional pressures on leaders for social justice.

Blackmore (2002) concludes that these countervailing pressures and norms of public schools put immense demands and burdens on leaders seeking justice. Responding to these demands and burdens necessitates that these leaders create and maintain alternative, unconventional, and caring constructions of leadership (Larson & Murtadha, 2002). These leaders work both outside and within the mainstream (Scheurich, 1998; Strachan, 1997). This type of innovative and critical leadership is not valued or wanted by communities and district officials who do not possess this passion for justice (Vibert & Portelli, 2000). These principals can be labeled as “radicals,” “miscreants,” “mavericks,” or “troublemakers” (Bogotch, 2002; Dantley, 2002) or treated as though they are incompetent by district officials (Touchton & Acker-Hocevar, 2001). Attitudes toward these principals and their work is further complicated by the reality that
principals leading for justice who have an understanding of the complexities of race and poverty are working for and with colleagues who generally do not (Lyman & Villani, 2002; Solomon, 2002).

Bogotch (2002) agrees that undertaking this “heroic” work does not go unpunished. Social justice leaders have been forced out of their positions (Oakes et al, 2000; Perry, 1997) and there is a tremendous personal and physical toll (Strachan, 1997; Vibert & Portelli, 2000). A summary of the pressures from the literature that these leaders face can be found in Table 2. To deal with the consequences imposed upon them by the countervailing pressures, social justice leaders develop what Strachan (1997) describes as on-going resistance.

Strachan (1997) suggests that this resistance can take diverse forms and can include committing to democratic decision making despite the time and energy it takes in combination with their increased workload. Their resistance can take the form of refusing to be consumed by the managerial tasks that threaten their passionate “big picture” work. Their resistance can take the form of refusing to be silent about salient issues, and giving constant attention to balancing their own personal and professional lives.

Rapp (2002) describes the struggle these leaders face with the well-known image of the Chinese dissident standing before the tank in Tiananmen Square. This is a powerful image of how one “small” person somehow can overcome the enormity of a tank. Principals leading for social justice face these challenges everyday and despite these challenges they resist, survive and transform schools (Rapp, 2002; Riester, et al, 2002; Scheurich, 1998; Strachan, 1997).
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<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opposition from those who benefit from the current state of education</td>
<td>Oakes et al. (2000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valuing traditional/technical leadership</td>
<td>Brown (2004a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders forced out</td>
<td>Oakes et al. (2000); Perry (1997)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities and school staff want to ignore race</td>
<td>Bell et al. (2002); Skrla et al. (2004); Solomon (2002)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communities and school staff do not want to deal with issues of poverty</td>
<td>Lyman &amp; Villani (2002)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Negative community beliefs about schools and staff with low test scores</td>
<td>Oakes et al. (2000); Touchton &amp; Acker-Hocevar (2001)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Schools with low test scores struggle to attract and keep innovative teachers</td>
<td>Touchton &amp; Acker-Hocevar (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schools with more marginalized students have lower quality teachers</td>
<td>Skrla et al. (2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of understanding of inequity present</td>
<td>Skrla et al. (2004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to enforce zero-tolerance policies</td>
<td>Bell et al. (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative leadership not valued</td>
<td>Vibert &amp; Portelli (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals labeled negatively</td>
<td>Bogotch (2002); Dantley (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treated as incompetent</td>
<td>Touchton &amp; Acker-Hocevar (2001)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tremendous personal and physical toll</td>
<td>Strachan (1997); Vibert &amp; Portelli</td>
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In the literature on social justice and leadership, the lack of equity focus in administrative preparation programs was addressed in numerous ways. Within the literature about leadership for equity or social justice several references were made to the gap in administrative preparation programs and I discuss this next.

*Lack of equity focus of administrator preparation programs.*

“Educational administration and social justice have nothing in common.”

(Rapp, 2002, p.226)

There is no doubt that the field of educational leadership is in crisis...as schools, especially in urban settings, are becoming more diverse, upholding such a restricted perspective regarding difference [equating difference with deficiency] portend deleterious results for those enmeshed in the culture of schools.

(Dantley, 2002, p.334)

“Educational leadership does not have a history of being on the forefront when it comes to social justice.”

(Kohl as quoted in MacKinnon, 2000, p. 13)

“Traditional training for educational leadership reflects a culture that has marginalized issues and concerns of social justice.”

(Marshall, 2004a, p. 6)

Rapp (2002), Dantley (2002), MacKinnon (2000), and Marshall (2004a) assert that at this time educational leadership preparation programs are preparing principals to be managers of “what is” in schools, rather than lead schools toward “what could be.” In doing so, these programs support either implicitly or explicitly unjust agendas. Most educational administration training
is not focused on understanding the inequities of our society nor is it focused on preparing principals to engage in equity or social justice work (Bell et al., 2002; Brown, 2004a; Lyman & Villani, 2002; Marshall, 2004; Pohland & Carlson, 1993; Rapp, 2002; Rusch, 2004; Solomon, 2002).

In fact, researchers found administrator preparation programs of the University Council of Education Administration to be “conservative” (Pohland & Carlson, 1993, p.8); “that educational administration faculty have limited knowledge about how to prepare educational leaders to work with culturally and linguistically diverse populations” (Rusch, 2004,p. 17), and “that many faculty perpetuate myopic views of equity and justice in schools, show minimal understanding of democratic practices, and portray equity issues as no problem (Anderson, 1990; Grundy, 1993; Kempner, 1991)” (Rusch, p. 18). Additionally, Rusch reported a study by Rapp that found doctoral students have been discouraged from addressing issues of equity. Students and professors who present issues, interests, and understanding of social justice, race, poverty, disability, gay/lesbian, language minority students, and other marginalized groups are “tolerated as long as they do not propose changing the normal activities or standards of practice.” (Marshall, 2004a, p. 7).

Principals require a wealth of skills to move a school toward justice, but a deep personal awareness of one’s own assumptions and rich, reflective understanding of the social, economic and political world is a prerequisite for real equity (Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Rapp, 2002; Riester et al., 2002; Singleton, 2002-2003a). Adrienne Rich (2001) states, “until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched, we will not know ourselves.”
Principals who do not understand or are not trained to understand the complexities of poverty do not move their schools beyond traditional failure of poor children (Lyman & Villani, 2002). Many principals, in particular white principals, do not understand, see or admit to the impact and the pervasiveness of racism and white privilege in schools and therefore cannot address these issues or begin to close the achievement gap of the color line (Bell et al., 2002; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Marshall, 2004a; Rapp, 2002; Singleton & Noli, 2001; Solomon, 2002). Similarly, many leaders do not understand the historic marginalization and complexities of special education or the social construction of disability and therefore cannot develop equitable and just programs for students with disabilities (Karagiannis et al., 1996a, 1996b; Skrtic, 1995). If leaders do not understand these fundamental issues of justice facing students then, it is unlikely, given the key role principals and their belief systems play in the progress of schools (Riester et al., 2002), that the majority of schools will transcend the historic oppression of many children.

At the same time, however, there are leaders who, according to Rapp (2002), “leave the comforts and confines of professional codes and state mandates for the riskier waters of higher moral callings” (p.233). These leaders, if they are not learning their equity and justice work in their preparation programs, but are effective in transforming schools are coming to the profession with this social justice orientation, knowledge and/or calling already as a part of their belief systems.
Implications

Understanding the barriers to teaching and leading for social justice is not meant to depress readers and should not thwart present and future administrators from seeking equity and justice for their students. It would certainly be easier to understand this multitude of barriers and then resign the field of administration to inactivity claming “there are too many barriers” or “we cannot do this alone.” That is the easy choice and often subconsciously or consciously the path too often chosen. This is not the first moment in history when true inequities existed in schools, but now the field of educational administration is choosing to no longer turn a blind eye to the injustice perpetuated for years in public schools. This blind eye has in turn helped to create the institutional and cognitive barriers to social justice reported in this paper. The answer lies in centering administrator practice and preparation on equity and justice.

*Implications for practice.* In response to the barriers presented in this meta-analysis, three vital steps are necessary for current administrators to take to lead for social justice while resisting the formidable barriers. These steps include learning, infusing, and sustaining.

In terms of *learning*, enacting and leading for social justice requires complex and deeply well informed leadership (Bell et al., 2002; Blackmore, 2002; Brown, 2004; Lyman & Villani, 2002; Rapp, 2002; Riester et al, 2002; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Shields, 2004; Shields et al. 2002). Current educational leaders need to enroll themselves in professional development to deepen their knowledge base and uncover their own assumptions about equity,
race, poverty, language, gender, sexuality, and disability. This learning will help to build a solid knowledge base and allow the administrators to better understand themselves, their beliefs, and values that are vital to their leadership (Brown, 2004a; Ubben, Hughes & Norris, 2004). These leaders cannot hope to change their schools and districts into more socially just and equitable institutions unless they have a foundation/consciousness in these issues and are comfortable leading other people’s learning journey.

The second step for practicing administrators is *infusing* equity and social justice into all aspects of the school and interactions with staff and community members. This needs to take both overt and covert opportunities. Part of their teaching must be to name and lead investigation of issues of race, class, language, gender, sexuality, and disability. Equally vital is an infusing of these issues into conversations, data presentations, meetings, priorities and the everyday life of schools. This leadership serves to raise the consciousness and knowledge base of staff and community members and it allows for broad stakeholders to see and understand present day inequities. Equity and justice in schools cannot be add-ons but a re-conceptualized part of everyday work and thinking in schools.

The third step practicing administrators must take is *sustaining* themselves. The multi-dimensional and persistent barriers described in this paper require administrators to be able to develop and utilize strategies to maintain both their work and their personal sanity. While some in the field of administration see self-care as overly “touchy-feely,” administrators who seek justice in schools face tough resistance and need the skills and strategies to be able to weather rough waters. Sustaining themselves can take a variety of forms,
from developing supportive administrative networks to learning new delegating and shared decision making techniques, from protecting their personal lives to consciously seeking out energizing activities. Their efforts to sustain themselves will allow administrators to continue seeking social justice in the face of these tough barriers.

These three steps create skills, knowledge base, and broader understanding that may help to overcome many of the barriers described. These steps also create space for teachers, ready to pursue teaching for social justice, and builds the knowledge and skills in others who were previously not prepared to do this. While this learning and infusing is not new to schools, this recommendation is distinct in that the learning and teaching are focused on equity issues, which is much less common. With this greater knowledge base building administrators have the lenses to build school schedules and school structures that support and promote social justice. Learning about and tackling these difficult and sensitive issues also creates the opportunity for administrators to better understand themselves, their own priorities, and the lines they draw in the sand.

In sum, administrators need to seek out and take part in their own learning and wrestling with issues of race, class, gender, ability, sexuality and language. They need to facilitate learning and infuse equity and justice issues into all aspects of leading their communities and school staffs, and finally they need to find ways to sustain themselves in the face of significant barriers. These three steps help create both the knowledge and space to move schools in the direction of equity and justice.
**Implications for preparation.** Administrator preparation that addresses future administrators' ability to lead for social justice in the face of the barriers identified in this meta-analysis must infuse equity and justice into and throughout the preparation program. To overcome what Marshall (2004a) argues that “traditional training for educational leadership reflects a culture that has marginalized issues and concerns of social justice” (p. 6), equity and justice cannot be an add-on on top of the regular preparation, but worked into all aspects of administrator preparation. This infusing will result in two outcomes for future administrators: a reflective consciousness and a set of leadership skills to overcome the barriers.

The reflective consciousness is necessary to give leaders a drive to enact justice the will to continue this work in the face of barriers. Developing this consciousness requires preparation programs to involve their students in learning and wrestling with race, class, gender, language, sexuality, disability, and sexuality. Developing a knowledge base in these areas is a prerequisite to administrators developing the will to lead in the direction of social justice.

In addition to this reflective consciousness, preparation program need to develop additional skills that will allow their graduates to do justice work in the face of the barriers described in this paper. These skills need to include the ability to collect, use, understand data with an equity/justice lens, presentation skills not only with the ability to create a present day picture but the organizing skills to bring people who are unconvinced along, networking skills to build and maintain relationships with other administrators who are tackling similar justice work, and the self-preservation strategies to be able to handle not only the nature
of administration but the additional barriers that occur with leading for social justice. These skills have not always been a component of administrator preparation and they are necessary in order for future administrators to be able to deal with the barriers discussed in this paper.

In sum, the implications for practice and preparation result in changing the meta-narrative of “good leadership.” Good leadership cannot truly be good leadership without the will to lead for social justice and the skills to do it. The barriers presented in the literature on teaching and leading for social justice give great cause at the urgency of developing this distinct set of consciousness and skills. If future and practicing administrators are going to lead their schools in the direction of social justice, they must be prepared to overcome the formidable barriers they will encounter.
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References


