PREPARING EDUCATIONAL LEADERS FOR QUEER INCLUSION IN SCHOOLS

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of
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by

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San Francisco, California
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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *Preparing Educational Leaders for Queer Inclusion in Schools* by Valerie Royaltey-Quandt, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership at San Francisco State University.

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PREPARING EDUCATIONAL LEADERS FOR QUEER INCLUSION IN SCHOOLS

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Educational leaders are required to ensure equitable academic outcomes for all students, regardless of social class, race, gender, language, cultural identity, or other factors—including sexual orientation. Though the concept of equitable schooling and education is a common thread that runs through social justice leadership and teaching, a specific focus on queer issues has been elusive. In the rapidly changing political and social landscape for queer people, there is an increasing need to define the educational impact of marginalization on queer youth. For school leaders specifically, the job of maintaining a social justice focus on this community is imperative if all students are to receive equitable treatment in schools, and achieve equitable academic and developmental outcomes. This study examines how social justice leadership can interrogate and disrupt the heteronormative foundation of the public education system.

I certify that the abstract is a correct representation of the content of this dissertation.

David Hemphill, Ed.D., Chair, Dissertation Committee

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Chapter One: Statement of the Problem

“We live in strategic times.”
- Cris Mayo, AERA participant, 2015.

On July 9, 2015, the American Educational Research Association (AERA) held a briefing on Capitol Hill entitled “LGBT Issues in Education: Advancing a Research Agenda.” While the briefing maintained its central message regarding the health, safety, emotional well-being and academic achievement of LGBT students, a broader perspective of inclusion and capacity-building in school leadership was also noted. This represents a progressive move away from the historically pathologized analysis of LGBT students and staff, and signifies a cultural turning point of affirmation and growing inclusion. The briefing reported that the most recent U.S. Census recognized 600,000 plus same-sex households, with 25% of them raising children (AERA, 2015). Importantly, it names “supportive faculty and school administrators” and “inclusive curriculum with positive representation of LGBTQ people, issues and history” as primary factors necessary for an inclusive educational environment (AERA, 2015). One of the significant recommendations made by AERA at the Capitol Hill briefing was that scholars and researchers be supported and encouraged to study LGBTQ¹ issues in education as part of their research agendas. For those leading the way in education, these are defining and strategic times.

¹ Throughout this paper, there are a variety of terms and acronyms used to represent LGBTIQ (lesbian, gay, bisexuality, transgender, intersex, queer) identities. Because these fluctuations authentically represent the emerging exploration of queer identities and their naming, the terms remain as authors have noted. Otherwise, I use the term “queer” throughout to represent the broad and fluid spectrum of gender identity.

This study uses the term queer as an overlay for both sexual orientation experience and ideology, as well as gender expression and experience within the educational environment. Joel Baum (2016), in a presentation from his organization Gender Spectrum, distinguishes the two strands in the following way: sexual orientation denotes relationship to others, and gender identity and expression represent relationship to self. Because his three dimensions of gender (biology, expression and identity) can be broadly understood to also relate to sexual orientation, I have opted to use the term *queer* throughout this study when discussing both sexual orientation and gender identity and expression elements. However, I fully acknowledge that using queer as an overarching term does not sufficiently value and represent all experiences herein. But because the focus in this study is on educational leadership and inclusion in schools, many of the same practices, understandings, and learning need to take place for gender as they do for sexuality.

One of the early foundational critiques of education administration preparation programs offered a necessary criticism of educational leadership preparation programs, although it is now considered a somewhat dated perspective. The review offered by Arthur Levine in *Educating School Leaders* (2005) noted that although the scope and magnitude of the job of the school principal has increased and diversified dramatically, preparation for these jobs remains overwhelmingly static and removed from the changing demands of actual practice. For teacher leaders, school principals, and superintendents in charge of leading significant transformation in schools and school districts, the chasm between preparation and praxis remains a growing problem for education. Trujillo & Cooper (2014) bring the analysis up to date by asserting that “a divide between

conceptual accounts of equity-minded, social justice leadership frameworks, and analyses of their application to leadership preparation still exists (p. 143.)

According to Freire (1971), the definition of praxis is people acting together to critically reflect on their environment for the purpose of transformative action. School leaders have fallen behind in our reflection, and in our action.

For educational leaders to go beyond traditional paradigms of school leadership that still resemble hierarchical business models, social justice leadership approaches demand a specific and courageous focus on issues previously marginalized by administrative preparation programs (Lugg, 2003; Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006; Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009). As educators grapple with the accountability demands of 21st century teaching and learning, there is a dearth of frameworks that will enable the development of an emerging generation of critically focused educational leaders. Even a decade ago, there was growing concern from educational researchers like Levine (2005) and Elmore (2004), who expressed the view that school leaders may not be sufficiently prepared to confront and challenge the changes that need to occur in an increasingly complex world order. For Levine and Elmore, the concern did not yet include a social justice focus or queer inclusion in education—only the acknowledgement of a new frontier for educational leadership and lack of preparation to lead it.

Notable demographic shifts have taken place in the school populations across the country in the last several decades, creating schisms where school leaders and teachers can be ethnically and culturally distinct from their students, with different understandings of community and cultural connection. Specifically, leaders need to directly interrogate the dominant ideology (Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009) and “debate what makes

up the knowledge base that school administrators need...and who has a voice in this discussion” (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006, p. 210). Major cultural transformations, demographic shifts, an increased focus on underserved populations and their academic achievement, and an increasingly multicultural, multiethnic, and multi-religious society have changed the role of the educational leader (Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009). Over the past decade, scholars such as Capper (2006), Theoharis (2007), and Furman (2012), among others, have given voice to previously silent demographics not recognized in the earlier educational leadership studies of Levine (2005) and Elmore (2004).

Social justice is a politically charged and complex construct that can be approached in numerous ways. According to Theoharis (2007), social justice entails making “ issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their [school leaders] advocacy, leadership, practice and vision” (p. 223). Though it has roots in many disciplines, including theology, law, philosophy, sociology, and has been applied to education primarily in the areas of curriculum theory and critical pedagogy, its evolution in the field of educational administration and leadership is relatively new and understudied in available literature on leadership preparation (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006; Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009). Nonetheless, educational leaders are charged with ensuring equitable academic outcomes for all students, regardless of social class, race, gender, language, cultural identity, or other factors—including sexual orientation and sexual identity. The preparation of educational leaders for these roles suggests a need to focus on social justice and a connection to issues of

equity in education, then, that is unprecedented. For these reasons, the foundational themes presented in this paper are theories of educational leadership, social justice theory, and queer theory.

Capper, Theoharis, and Sebastian (2006) suggest a methodology for preparing school leaders for social justice work that involves constructing a vertical framework of pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment that intersects with a horizontal framework of “critical consciousness, knowledge, and practical skills” (p. 212). At the time of their study of LGBT inclusion in leadership preparation almost a decade ago, Capper, Theoharis, and Sebastian (2006) conducted a thorough review of the research literature on administrative preparation, concluding that *no* articles contained references to sexual orientation in social justice preparation. Although several social justice frameworks included references to “dispositions, knowledge and skills” (p. 211) that administrators were expected to obtain, as well as the “awareness, understanding and capability” (p. 211) outlined in the NPBEA (National Policy Board for Educational Administration) Standards for Advanced Programs in Educational Leadership in 2002, LGBT inclusion in those standards was altogether absent (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006.)

Furman (2012) offers that although a more recent review of literature demonstrates an increase in support and analysis of the need for queer inclusive social justice preparation, few scholars approach the issue with frameworks focused on leadership development and praxis (Furman, 2012). As a response, Furman proposes a praxis framework for building capacities in educational leaders necessary for social justice work. She identifies “personal, interpersonal, communal, systemic, and ecological” (p. 191) dimensions in her analysis. The author outlines a manner of

developing and delivering both reflective and actionable curriculum for leaders that takes into account the actual skills required to meet the demands of the 21st century school leader.

Brown (2004) constructs a framework for social justice leadership preparation that is based upon three foundational theories: adult learning theory, transformative learning theory, and critical social theory (p. 78). She asserts, “if current and future educational leaders are to foster successful, equitable, and socially responsible learning and accountability practices for all students, then substantive changes in educational leadership preparation and professional development programs are required” p. 80). Brown proposes a conceptual and theoretical synthesis of three critical theories, framed within the context of adult learners, to interrogate ontological and epistemological assumptions regarding educational and social justice.

Leadership for Queer Equity

There is a direct correlation between organizational structure, leadership, inclusivity, perceptions of safety and belonging, and academic achievement (Theoharis, 2007). For queer students in California’s public schools, “safe space” is a daily concern, and one that impacts educational achievement and emotional, social, and sometimes physical well-being. GLSEN’s (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) 2013 National School Climate Survey of high school students showed that harassment at school was linked to lower academic achievement among lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender students. Students who were more frequently harassed because of their sexual orientation, perceived orientation, or gender expression reported an average grade point average (GPA) almost half a grade lower than students who were less often

harassed (GLSEN, 2008). There is increasing public acknowledgement of the need for safe space, and the physical, social, and emotional responsibility that schools have for students. Emphasis on new laws and school legislation such as California's AB 537, The School Safety and Violence Prevention Act of 2000 developed in direct response to data on increased suicidal ideation, heightened awareness of violence toward queer students, and dropout rates.

Many new laws and school policies serve to react and protect against—as opposed to unearth and analyze—foundational and pervasive beliefs about gender normative behaviors in schools. Unfortunately, most of the focus on school equity issues related to queer youth in schools is limited to a deficit perspective that addresses topics of bullying, harassment, mental health, stress and self-esteem, and drop-out rates.

Recent legislation, for example, has sought to provide “anti-bullying” and “safe space” protection without thoroughly examining the reasons why the legislation was required in the first place. There are bills such as AB 537, which states that all public schools in California must protect students from harassment and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, or Seth's Law, AB 9 (2009), which was implemented in reaction to a teen suicide as a result of school bullying and the school's improper handling of the situation.

As Lugg (2003) notes, “by making queer students the subjects of special protective services, a state or local school board has still reinforced the notion of queer as deviant” (p. 23). As school leaders and polices continue to “other” queer experience in the school environment, and to imply that queer experience is deficient and in need of

protection, P-20 students, faculty, and administrators remain inappropriately educated about the broad spectrum of gender manifestation and lived experience of sexuality.

Even though California has recently attempted to include positive representations of queer experience in secondary social studies curricula, as evidenced by the passage of the SB 48 FAIR Education Act of 2012, implementation and professional development for the bill's required curricular inclusion has been limited, and there is no accountability system in place to ensure its implementation. Although the SB 48 FAIR Education Act was adopted in 2010, few school districts in California have made efforts to revise or compile resources, or to provide professional development to implement inclusive curriculum and teaching in their schools. The FAIR Education Act was intended to align curriculum and instruction in P-20 classrooms with existing laws to support LGBT inclusion in line with our current understanding of other underrepresented cultural identities, which are already included in curriculum and related instructional materials. From a conceptual perspective, including "fair and accurate" representation in schools is expected to improve school climate and safety, and to broaden the learning experience and respect level for all students in California schools (Downing, 2010).

The invisibility that exists in P-20 schools surrounding queer issues is similarly evident in leadership programs responsible for preparing the next generation of school leaders, although in ways that extend to policy and practice. Though many educational theorists and social justice leaders have advocated for culturally relevant teaching for students of color and other underrepresented populations, the same level of attention has not yet been extended to include LGBTI inclusion (Capper, Theoharis & Sebastian, 2006; Theoharis, 2007), and an understanding of how these identities can overlap in unique

ways for individual students is even less acknowledged. Much of the current discussion around queer experience remains narrowly based upon bullying and harassment, as opposed to a broader affirmation of queer cultural identity. Token references to gay or lesbian authors, athletes, or historical figures, as well as school policies against bullying and harassment of non-gender conforming students and staff, may only serve to highlight the marginalization of queer culture and to maintain the educational habit of “othering.” Curricula for educational leadership preparation programs should therefore be advanced to include not only the analysis of sexual orientation and its relationship to educational disadvantage, but also affirmative representations of queer culture.

Rationale for the Study

Building capacity in educational leadership to manage radical, disruptive organizational change is a core problem in education, not only in California, but also in the rest of the United States. For emerging school leaders of 2016, queer experience in the educational environment is a quickly evolving issue due to the rapidly changing political, social, and legal environment. To disrupt the cycle of homophobic and heteronormative curriculum, instruction, and policy, leaders need a high level of skill, awareness, and capacity for advocacy.

It is important to clarify the differences between the constructs of homophobia and heteronormativity. Homophobia refers to the fear or aversion to homosexuals, while heteronormativity refers to the attitude or expectation that heterosexuality is the normal and natural expression of sexuality (Merriam-Webster, 2015). The assumption that educational leadership programs adequately train school administrators and leaders to guide and support their teams in such a demanding and complex areas as culturally

responsive education belies the deep historical impact of internalized homophobia in education. In order to challenge dominant norms, the “fundamental task of the educational leader in this transformative tradition is to ask questions...about the purposes of schooling, about which ideas should be taught, and about who is successful” (Shields, 2010). Because laws and educational practices and policies have historically criminalized gender non-conformity, there is deep work to do to unravel the damage done by homophobia to educational practice (Lugg, 2003).

There is a need for comprehensive practical study from a school leadership perspective about the hegemony of educational structures and how they shape institutionalized bias, discrimination, and even violence. Unfortunately, “leadership preparation programs/professors...have ignored this population’s existence and oppression” (deLeon, 2013, p. 162). Without the ability to lead and challenge other educators to examine hegemonic structures of power, privilege, stereotyping, bias, and how society and control systems are organized, educational leaders concerned with social justice are likely to fail (Apple, 1990). Because of the history of overt and covert homophobia in educational practice, the United States is challenged to come to terms with a changing world of gender law, inclusive curricula, and social justice imperatives that must begin with educational leadership that involves principals, teachers, and district administrators.

Research Question and Design

In my review of the literature, I have identified little research done to date on translating theory to praxis in the area of queer inclusion and formalized administrator preparation. Nonetheless, there is growing evidence to suggest that some individual

educational leaders are courageously guiding their organizations through sweeping progressive changes in culture, climate, instruction, and learning. This implies that despite the lack of research into the topic of queer inclusion, actual social justice work regarding sexual and gender equity on the ground is proceeding; it can be observed and experienced (Cooper, 2009; deLeon & Brunner, 2012).

This study, then, addresses the following research question:

- How can educational leadership support inclusion of queer experience?

The study employs a multiple case study research design. Multiple case studies provide the opportunity to compare experiences and data from multiple participants and contexts to identify trends in knowledge base, leadership skills, and how they manifest in everyday practice at the school and district level. Data from multiple case studies can be dynamic, real, and immediately actionable. Furthermore, case studies “recognize the complexity and ‘embeddedness’ of social truths” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 292). Particular focus is placed in the study upon identifying tipping points in understanding social justice leadership responsibility and praxis.

This multiple case study investigation aims to identify the characteristics, patterns, and behaviors of courageous school leadership in order to develop theory to explain the phenomena of queer inclusion. Deeper case study analysis will investigate the extent to which school leaders have: 1) experienced explicit preparation in social justice about this specific marginalized group related to educational success; 2) examined their own comfort, biases, and prejudices regarding queer identities, cultures and inclusivity; and 3) gained knowledge of educational strategies and leadership methods to challenge

overt and covert homophobia in the educational system (Marshall and Hernandez, 2012; Lugg, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1999).

A key study assumption is that participants will have undergone a transformational process or variety of transformational processes that can be recognized and defined, either through life or professional experience, professional preparation, or by other means (Mezirow, 1997; Taylor, 2007). It is projected, in line with transformative learning theory, that these processes may have enabled them to employ a variety of leadership skills based in leadership theory or queer theory that leads to the work they are doing in schools. Mezirow (1997) states that adults cannot enter into a transformative learning process without identifying and analyzing their own and others' assumptions critically. He contends that transformative learning is fundamental to adult learning, and therefore essential in the education of school leaders. "We transform our frames of reference through *critical reflection on the assumptions* upon which our interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind or points of view are based (Mezirow, 1997, p.7).

A pilot study that was recently conducted (Mattheis, Perey, & Royaltey-Quandt, 2015) synthesizes data from 108 graduate student and faculty participants who responded to questions regarding queer inclusion in Ed.D. programs across the California CSU system (focusing on curriculum, instruction, discussion, and theory). Results from the study range from expression of overt homophobia to active exclusion, microaggressions, and staunch competition for inclusion in oppressive hierarchies. Though it might have been assumed that academic discourse within Ed.D. programs would provide a venue for open dialogue and consideration of inclusive theory and practice regarding oppression and educational hegemony, preliminary study findings suggest inconsistency in the

treatment of queer inclusion and acceptance in CSU educational leadership programs. These pilot study findings therefore buttress the need for the current study.

Similarly, O'Malley and Capper (2015) report on a comprehensive study of inclusion of queer issues in university administrator preparation programs, remarking that discussion and development of competency around inclusion of LGBTIQ identities remain "optional" in many programs that purport to focus on social justice leadership. As another researcher observed, "colleges and universities have evolved to tolerate the generation of queer theory from within but have stalwartly resisted the queering of higher education itself" (Renn, 2010, p. 132). Queer theory here refers to post-structuralist interpretations of critical cultural theory emerging out of queer studies and women's studies.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

In the existing literature, the need to bridge leadership theories and practice in schools is evident, and only a few researchers have proposed ways in which theory can inform programmatic change in education, particularly with respect to queer inclusion (Furman, 2012; Capper & O'Malley, 2015). The conceptual framework proposed for this study applies the theoretical strands of queer theory and social justice leadership theory in order to specifically focus the framework for reflection and evaluation offered by adult transformative learning theory.

Queer theory has much to offer educational leadership scholarship. It investigates the intersections of sex, sexuality, and gender and gender identity, while deconstructing the pervasive normative expectations of heterosexuality and its relationship to social behaviors and power structures (Mayo, 2007; Jean-Marie, Normore & Brooks, 2009).

Queer theory interacts with leadership theories to potentially disrupt assumptions about the essential roles of race, class, gender *and* sexual orientation in schooling, and to enable scholarly examination of the hidden heteronormative curriculum of P-20 schools and educational leadership preparation programs (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006; Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009).

The value of examining educational leadership preparation through a lens of queer theory is recognized by Renn (2010), who notes that “queer theory might shed light on these problems through research that questions normative constructions of socially constructed binaries such as male/female, teacher/learner, leader/follower, research/practice, or K-12/postsecondary” (p. 132). By incorporating such an understanding with an examination of existing leadership preparation and practice, this qualitative multiple case study investigation illuminates best practice models for leaders in education to support queer experience within the educational environment.

Furman (2012) provides a useful framework for understanding the developing capacities and themes in educational leadership programs with a social justice focus from her review of literature in this field. Her conceptual framework for social justice leadership is based in the Freirean sense of praxis, acknowledging the need for reflection and action. For adults entering the professional field of socially just educational leadership, Furman’s themes outline foundational skills, practices and tools.

Action-oriented and transformative. Extending from Shields’ (2003) work on transformative leadership, Furman contends that leaders for social justice are responsible for dissenting and resisting while as serving as activists to subvert the school environment.

Committed and persistent. Furman recognizes that social justice leaders are persistent and courageous in dealing with the inevitable obstacles and opposition inherent in this work in schools.

Inclusive and democratic. With specific focus on dismantling exclusive and marginalizing practices, social justice leaders work to create and support policies and practices that “facilitate opportunities for empowerment” (p. 196). This involves building capacity and critical awareness around strategies and approaches to inclusion not only in the school itself, but the entire school community.

Relational and caring. Authentic communication and caring relationships are primary aspects of this leadership. Using dialogue and personal connection to move forward an agenda of social justice is a pattern noted in Furman’s case studies.

Reflective. Social justice leaders must critically examine their own prejudices and biases in order to support not only their own personal awareness and growth, but the growth of those around them. Reflecting on deep-seated values and beliefs is an essential practice of the effective leader.

Oriented toward a socially just pedagogy. School leaders affect and support inclusive teaching and learning as a central component of their roles. Critically examining the institutionalized biases of race, class and gender in curriculum and pedagogy encourages more equitable representations of previously marginalized groups.

Barriers to social justice leadership. Theoharis (2007) raises cautions around deficit thinking and technical over moral leadership, as well as recognition of the impact on social justice leadership on leaders themselves, and the need to develop coping strategies in order to sustain work in these areas.

Furman (2012) builds on these leadership capacities to create a conceptual framework using five dimensions for social justice leadership praxis: personal, interpersonal, communal, systemic, and ecological (p. 204.) By promoting “reflection and action across each dimension” (p. 205), Furman’s conceptual framework outlines critical strategies in each of the dimensions that can be incorporated into educational leadership preparation programs, but that are currently lacking. Furman’s conceptual framework was created by analyzing studies by Brooks, Jean-Marie, Normore, & Hodgins (2007) and Cooper (2009), among others, which illuminate social justice behaviors and skills in educational leaders. I intend to build from Furman’s conceptual framework and integrate queer inclusive findings into my own conceptual framework.

In February of this year, I attended the Calciano Youth Symposium, which presented the following topic: Clinical Essentials for the Increased Understanding of the Diverse Transgender Community. Joel Baum, the Senior Director of Professional Development and Family Services at Gender Spectrum described the work that the agency does with schools committed to transformative work around inclusion. Baum shared a quote widely attributed to Dr. Milton Diamond, Professor Emeritus at the University of Hawaii and scholar in human sexuality and biology: “nature loves diversity, society hates it.” Dr. Diane Ehrensaft, Director of Mental Health and founding member of the Child and Adolescent Gender Center and a clinical psychologist in the San Francisco Bay Area, also does work with Gender Spectrum to assist educators in “unlearning what we learned in school about gender.” The core tenet of the symposium was to provide data relevant for educators and clinicians to encourage and support more expansive

understanding about gender. The same expectation for expansive thinking can be applied to sexuality, as schools also dogmatically police sexual as well as gender norms.

Baum proposed four categories outlining the systemic work that needs to be done in schools: personal, interpersonal, structural, and instructional. These mirror to a great extent the conceptual framework proposed by Furman (2012). Personal work emphasizes the importance of learning and reflection, understanding of our own biases and interrogating our values, beliefs and experiences for the benefit of our students. Interpersonal work denotes use of language and dialogue for the purpose of growth and transformation, interruption of bias and discrimination, and modeling transformative leadership practices with students, staff, and the larger educational community. Structural work resides in the systems, policies, and practices that make up the infrastructure of a school. Instructional practices cover teaching and learning about integration and inclusion, and in gender and sexual orientation literacy among educators.

This study employs the four overarching themes generated by Baum and Furman (2012) to describe leaders' queer transformative work in schools, and to highlight examples of these four categories in the leadership practices of case study participants. Analyzing personal, interpersonal, structural, and instructional leadership behaviors and strategies through a queer social justice lens provides a conceptual framework for these case studies that builds upon the framework created by Furman.

Conceptual Framework

Key Terms

This section defines key terms employed in this study.

Gender. “The attitudes, feelings, and behaviors that a given culture associates with a person’s biological sex. Behavior that is compatible with cultural expectations is referred to as gender normative; behaviors that are viewed as incompatible with these expectations constitute gender non-conformity” (American Psychological Association, 2011).

Sex. “A person’s biological status and is typically categorized as male, female, or intersex (i.e., atypical combinations of features that usually distinguish male from female). There are a number of indicators of biological sex, including sex chromosomes, gonads, internal reproductive organs, and external genitalia” (American Psychological Association, 2011).

Sexual orientation. “The sex of those to whom one is sexually and romantically attracted. Categories of sexual orientation typically have included attraction to members of one’s own sex (gay men or lesbians), attraction to members of the other sex

(heterosexuals), and attraction to members of both sexes (bisexuals). While these categories continue to be widely used, research has suggested that sexual orientation does not always appear in such definable categories and instead occurs on a continuum” (American Psychological Association, 2011).

Gender expression. “The way in which a person acts to communicate gender within a given culture; for example, in terms of clothing, communication patterns and interests. A person’s gender expression may or may not be consistent with socially prescribed gender roles, and may or may not reflect his or her gender identity” (American Psychological Association, 2011).

Gender nonconforming. “A person who doesn’t conform to society’s expectations of gender expression based on the gender binary, expectations of masculinity and femininity, or how they should identify their gender” (Gender Equity Resource Center, UC Berkeley).

Genderqueer: “A term which refers to individuals or groups who “queer” or problematize the hegemonic notions of sex, gender and desire in a given society. Genderqueer people possess identities which fall outside of the widely accepted sexual binary (i.e. “men” and “women”). Genderqueer may also refer to people who identify as both transgendered AND queer, i.e. individuals who challenge both gender and sexuality regimes and see gender identity and sexual orientation as overlapping and interconnected.” (<https://internationalspectrum.umich.edu/life/definitions>)

LGBTIQ. An umbrella term used to identify people who identify themselves as fitting into the categories of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or questioning.

Queer. “A political statement, as well as a sexual orientation, which advocates breaking binary thinking and seeing both sexual orientation and gender identity as potentially fluid” (Gender Equity Resource Center, UC Berkeley).

Queering. To recognize “shifting boundaries, ambivalences and cultural constructions that change depending on historical and cultural context” (Brooker, 1999).

Social justice leadership. School leadership that links social justice with academic achievement, critical consciousness, and inclusive practices (McKenzie et al, 2007).

Transformative leadership. Transformative leadership behaviors are defined as “idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration” (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005, p. 180).

Heteronormativity. A term describing the ways in which gender and sexuality are separated into hierarchically organized categories. It has become an important way of thinking about sexuality within the academic study of sexuality and gender relationships, framing the belief that non-heterosexual relationships and gender non-conforming behaviors create marginalized spaces for those who do not comply. Theorists have argued that a discourse of heteronormativity has been established, and subsequently dominates, social institutions such as the family, the state, and education (Gender and Education Association, 2013).

Inclusivity. The fact or policy of not excluding members or participants on the grounds of gender, race, class, sexuality, disability, or other circumstances (The Free Dictionary, 2003).

Position of the Researcher

In 2002 when I was a high school teacher, I was honored to be asked to be the advisor for the school's first (and controversial) Gay Straight Alliance club. A group of students were gathering together informally to support one of their peers who had just come out as gay, and was having difficulty at home with his parents and also at school with harassment from other students. As the group grew over the next two years, we did an increasing amount of public work around the school concerning advocacy, bullying, participating in the Day of Silence, and attending a GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network) conference. The high school where I taught was a predominantly White, upper middle class, politically conservative area that struggles with diversity and acceptance. Having a GSA was a new experience for the school in general, and for the leadership in particular.

The principal at the time was Mr. Jones, a White, conservative, old-school principal who was a former coach and social studies teacher. He had been named interim principal to "bring some stability" to the school after we had experienced leadership turnover every year since the school's opening in 2000. He was popular with parents, congenial, decision-avoidant, and a traditional managerial school principal. Initially he supported my efforts as a relatively new teacher. However, the tide began to turn in our previously amicable relationship when I became the GSA advisor. This was my first foray into school politics and social justice, and it left a lasting impression on me, which changed my career trajectory and life path.

We had a creative and progressive lesbian English teacher who had a poster on her wall showing a variety of gay and lesbian authors. One day, she opened her room to

find that her poster had been torn off the wall and had disappeared. There was no explanation, and no communication from anyone in administration—custodial or otherwise. The supportive teaching staff was outraged. The blatant disregard for property and lack of respect was appalling. It took months to discover the truth.

A few weeks after the disappearance of the poster, I was asked to help two of our young GSA club members speak to the principal. These girls were dating, and had become more comfortable with being open about their relationship. They were also being harassed overtly and physically in their PE class, and a group of boys had been hurling basketballs at them as if they were being used for target practice. The girls wanted to inform the principal of this harassment and ask for his support. They asked me to serve as an advocate. During our meeting with the principal, he summarily dismissed their concerns and situation. The girls were dismayed and disappointed, having had their emerging identities and experiences invalidated by an important authority figure and school leader. I was livid. No amount of re-focusing on the girls' lived experience and need for protection or understanding changed Mr. Jones' mindset or interaction with them. This meeting was the moment when I decided to become a school administrator, as my academic and professional understanding of social justice was ignited.

The following year, in 2003, I came under attack from some members of the parent community for displaying a poster in my classroom with the caption "Respect all families." It showed different configurations of families, including different genders and sexualities. This matter developed into a school-wide protest and media event, culminating in a community-wide heated and emotional Board meeting of hundreds of people, press coverage, attorneys, and representatives from queer advocacy agencies. The

parent complaint was that I had a captive audience of impressionable youth in my classroom, whom I was subjecting to destructive and controversial content by displaying this poster advocating respect. The experience propelled me into educational leadership, solidifying my commitment to social justice work in education, and subsequently into this doctoral program and this dissertation.

By comparison, and a decade later in December of 2014, I attended the YES (Youth Empowerment Summit) conference at Mission High School in San Francisco with an enthusiastic group of students from my middle school Gay Straight Alliance. Most of the conference sessions were designed for youth, but one I attended was specifically for educators. The facilitator was Will Grant, and the session was about queer-inclusive history teaching. Will created a high school course in queer history using a variety of resources, primary documents, and previously ignored or hidden historical accounts of the presence of queer people world-wide. They ranged from ancient Greece, and present-day India, to the American Cowboy. Will's analysis was well-grounded and fascinating, and over the course of the session, his work made an impact on the educators in the room who had never before considered the pedagogical aspects of a queer-inclusive curriculum.

Most poignantly, however, was a statement Will made that impacted how I now think and act in towards queer inclusive education. He asserted that illuminating queer presence in history was not just about making the invisible visible. It was about realizing that decisions were made differently in politics, wars, love, alliances and migration/immigration *because* people were queer. Queer identity could not be separated from the

historical impact of being queer; it was not inconsequential. The idea that queer presence can shift historical meaning and context was profound.

After the conference, I asked Will to come and do a three-series workshop for teachers at my county office of education. I found sponsorship at the county level with the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, and we invited all of the social studies and history teachers in the county. Because California has adopted the Fair Act of 2010, I used as justification language from the mandate for inclusive education and the role of the educator in providing equitable representation of all in historical instruction. One of the difficulties with the FAIR Act is that although inclusive instruction is mandated for secondary social studies courses, there is no professional development or curriculum available for educators to support implementation. So offering a FAIR Act professional development and providing instructional materials was pivotal. For two months we sent out flyers and emails to teachers and their site administrators. We provided food and resources, and a convenient after school time and location. Ultimately we had nine total participants.

This experience crystallized for me an important focal point of intervention: site leadership. Although I had presented the workshop invitation to the district leadership team, I realized too late that they had not been willing to speak to their teachers about attending. Upon further discussion with several of the other principals I considered close colleagues, I found out that they really didn't know *how* to talk to their teachers about it. Some of the resistance was around actually language itself: the meaning of the word queer, the comfort with LGBTQ terminology and inclusiveness in conversation first, and curriculum and instruction later.

Many principals were unfamiliar with the FAIR Act in general, and did not know that it embodied a state mandate to include LGBT representation in teaching social studies and history. They also had questions and fears about potentially adverse reactions from parents and students to bringing queer representation into the classroom. Because we were talking about middle school and high school students, some of the questions I fielded were about “appropriateness” of “exposure” and developmental readiness.

Since our district leadership team had been already been actively working with an equity consultant on our district’s disproportionality issue (simply put, too many Black and Latino students qualified for Special Education services because of systemic discriminatory practices and hegemonic beliefs about cultural deficits in academics and behavior), I felt the time was right to assert queer presence in our discussion about “equity for all.” I asked the superintendent if I could make a presentation to the district leadership team about the FAIR Act, sharing the presentation elements from Will Grant’s series at the county office, to offer our school leaders language and resources that they could use with their own leadership teams and teachers.

My presentation to the district leadership team was a watershed event for me in my professional life. It was the first time I was presenting in front of a group of professionals about a social justice issue that was so intimately important to me, and so new and groundbreaking to them. I crafted a presentation starting with language use and terminology in my desire to lay the foundation in common understanding and permissions for leaders to talk about “queer things.” This was the first time in the district’s history, even considering my city’s liberal leaning, that an instructive

professional development had been given to educational leadership in the district regarding queer inclusive education.

It is frustrating for me to think that even with the progressive and revolutionary queer scholarship coming out of our local university (I consider my early professors' work, especially around intersectionality, to be progressive and revolutionary: Bettina Aptheker, Angela Davis, Gloria Hull) there was no trickle down into the local educational system and community. The isolation of the ideas at the university level, without regard to public practice or utility, seemed futile. It seemed essential to engage in professional conversation with my fellow educational leaders around a topic that was usually last on the list of topics about educational equity and inclusive representation in teaching and learning.

My presentation, on the surface, was well received. The group of classified and certificated educational leaders from the district was open and inquisitive, and asked pertinent and caring questions. I do not know how many of them went back to their sites and changed their use of language, opened any doors for queer inclusion in instruction, or had hard conversations with parents, students or teachers who do not believe that queer representation in education is valid. I do know that they now have some foundational language and historical information to refer to, and they can access additional information using new resources.

Since that presentation, I have subsequently served as a resource for several of my colleagues who are beginning to work the frontline of queer inclusive education. I am looking forward to continuing this social justice work with educational leadership. I have concluded that this is my professional pathway moving forward, and the experience I

gained by doing the workshop was valuable. My intention in giving an account here of this central intersection of the personal, professional, and academic in my recent life is to validate and expose my passion around the topic of queer inclusion as well as my dedication to transforming educational leadership for the 21st century and beyond.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction of Topics

The central focus of this study is to explore how educational leaders can be better prepared to disrupt the heteronormative hegemony of the contemporary P-20 educational system. The literature review presented in this chapter begins with a history of proscribed heteronormativity as reflected in the educational system of the United States. This is followed by an articulation of the study's theoretical framework, which includes relevant foundations from queer theory, critical race theory, community cultural wealth, and queer cultural capital. These perspectives are needed to frame the study's work of investigating leadership for queer inclusion in schools. A subsequent section examines adult transformative learning theory. A basis in this area of learning theory is required to understand how educational leaders become aware of their own experiences and biases, in order to transform self-reflection into social justice leadership. In the section that follows, the foregoing theoretical constructs are grounded in practice through a brief examination of four major educational leadership theories: the instructional, distributed, transformative, and social justice leadership approaches. Finally, emerging scholarship is reviewed on how principals are prepared for queer inclusion in schools through program curriculum, instruction, and design.

Heterosexim as a Historical Construct in Education

Educational theory and the history of public education in the United States are inextricably intertwined and reflective of each other. It is therefore important to review and critique dominant ideologies surrounding gender and sexuality that have been historically constructed and reinforced through the US educational system.

An enduring history of homophobia and heteronormativity. Lugg (2003)

explores how homophobia in education and heteronormative societal systems that embody a fear of gender spectrum expression are historically enforced and deeply embedded in the public education system. She describes how the hysteria surrounding teachers who were possibly queer has been documented in the United States for at least a century (Lugg, 2003). Renn (2010) refers to Waller's *The Sociology of Teaching* in 1932 as a foundational text for scholars and educators. Waller states that "homosexuality was a deviant, contagious, and dangerous disease" (as cited in Renn, 2010, p. 133) to be avoided at all costs by eradicating suspicious students and staff.

Lugg stresses that the teaching profession is still primarily female, and that historically there have been strict norms and expectations imposed upon women teachers. Until relatively recently, many school districts placed restrictions on female teachers marrying, and even on social interactions with men. In this way, female teachers in early public schools in the U.S. were relegated to being asexual, a perception controlled primarily by the school system (Lugg, 2003).

Lugg points out that for the most part, men who entered teaching in the early 20th century experienced varying levels of control via school rules and allowable social and sexual expression. There was also general suspicion about their sexuality and motivations to enter "women's work." The strongest presumption about these men was that they were homosexuals, since entering teaching deviated from normalized male roles and employment paths of the era (Lugg, 2003). Stereotypes and fear in educational spaces reflected patterns within American society as a whole, and mirrored social changes and industrial growth, as well as paranoia surrounding Communism, war, and emerging

perceptions of morality. Teachers and administrators were compelled to hide gender non-conforming identities due to professional codes of conduct, as well as explicit laws prohibiting homosexuality beginning in the 1950s under the Eisenhower administration. President Eisenhower's executive order targeting homosexuals in the federal workforce as "character problems" and "security risks" due to their "sexual perversion" was in effect from 1953 to 1993 (Ford, 2013.)

As the structure of public schooling evolved in the United States in the early twentieth century, and as the roles of school personnel were more institutionalized, it became common for men to rise to levels of leadership, while women generally maintained positions as classroom teachers. This mirrored social and business norms of the day. As school leaders, White heterosexual men assumed primary responsibility for the management of the business of schools, from personnel and structures of hierarchy to curriculum, laws, evaluation, and compliance. They presided over the explicit and implicit knowledge taught in schools, and they determined who was in control of that knowledge. As public schooling in the United States further developed, school leaders increasingly controlled and systematized hegemonic structures in place, especially after World War II, and into the early 1950s.

According to Apple (1990), "The kinds of cultural resources and symbols schools select and organize are dialectically related to the kinds of normative and conceptual consciousness 'required' by a stratified society" (p. 2). Apple's central question is about *whose* knowledge is reflected, transmitted, and socially reproduced through schooling. He acknowledges that while there is an undeniable connection between ideology and curriculum taught in schools, more work needs to be done regarding the development of a

program of social justice and education. Such a program includes the study of and response to normalization of heterosexism in the educational environment.

Dominant social themes in the 1940s and 1950s in the United States were replicated and enforced in school structures. This was particularly the case during the Red Scare of that era, when fear-based efforts were focused on weeding out citizens who could potentially damage the fabric of the American way due to their presumed degradation and immorality. Homosexuals—or perceived homosexuals—figured centrally in these threat perceptions (Lugg, 2003; Graves, 2013). Purposeful homophobic actions took shape in laws, policies, hiring practices, and power structures reflected in the educational hierarchy.

After the Red Scare, the “Lavender Scare” (as it was termed by Johnson, 2004) represented a targeted and systematic persecution of queer government employees, employing a rationale similar to the Red Scare. It questioned the “morality” and thus the capacity of queer personnel to personify “real Americans” (Ford, 2013).

One of two widespread public and political examples of the Lavender Scare was singer and beauty pageant winner Anita Bryant’s crusade to “Save Our Children.” Bryant’s campaign, which began 1977, sought to overturn anti-discrimination regulations in employment and housing in Florida. The national impact of the singer’s political witch-hunt was swift and devastating, as it whipped up fear concerning children’s emotional, educational, and physical safety. Bryant dramatically pointed out the risk to children’s souls if they were in schools tainted by homosexuals (Graves, 2013). Bryant’s threat that gays and lesbians would “recruit” children through schooling played on irrational fears of many parents, and was bolstered by her interpretation of the Christian faith and her conservative-themed book, *The Anita Bryant Story: The Survival of Out Nation’s Families*

and the Threat of Militant Homosexuality (1977). As a result, the active persecution of queers in education continued (Graves, 2013).

The Briggs Initiative in 1978, Proposition 6, soon followed in California. Sponsored by John Briggs, a conservative state legislator from Orange County, the failed initiative would have banned gays and lesbians, and possibly anyone who supported gay rights, from working in California's public schools. This initiative provided for

filing charges against school teachers, teachers' aides, school administrators or counselors for advocating, soliciting, imposing, encouraging or promoting private or public sexual acts as defined in sections 286(a) and 288a(a) of the Penal Code between persons of the same sex in a manner likely to come to the attention of other employees or students; or publicly and indiscreetly engaging in said acts.

(California Voters Pamphlet, 1978).

Keeping homosexuals, or perceived homosexuals, away from children was the impetus for many school rules and initiatives (Graves, 2013). Fear of irreparable harm was expressed in the inflammatory discourse of the Bryant and Briggs campaigns, strategically employing terms such as “infiltrate,” “corrupt,” and “captive” (Graves, 2013).

Although, as Graves (2013) notes, the American Psychological Association declassified homosexuality as a mental illness in 1973, progress towards gay rights and inclusion remained tenuous at best. The convergence of emerging civil rights for gays and lesbians and the Bryant and Briggs campaigns centered on schools because many powerful conservative leaders of the two initiatives (including Catholic Archbishop Coleman Francis Carroll of Miami and Anita Bryant's pastor, Reverend William Chapman) regarded schools as vital professional development grounds, making them battlegrounds

for ideological conflict (Graves, 2013). Bryant and Briggs were both exceptionally skilled at staying on message about the “normative powers of schooling” (p. 13). Kumashiro (2000) and Apple (1990) concur that even in broader issue areas, schooling is publicly acknowledged as the primary transmitter of what is considered normal.

Few, if any, educational leadership preparation programs address the history of homophobic schooling practices and the deeply entrenched discourse of heteronormativity. Brown (2004) notes that it is essential when preparing educational leaders for social justice schooling in the United States to explicitly teach adult learners about this normative agenda. She states,

By providing a retrospective, contemporary, and prospective examination of the social, cultural, political, economical, and philosophical contexts from which the current issues that affect schools and schooling have evolved, professors help adult learners understand how many of the educational policies and practices have tended to benefit members of the dominant culture (p. 91).

Heteronormativity in education reflected in the legal system. Lugg (2003) presents multiple examples of how paradoxes in law have resulted in discriminatory practices and systems for both queer students and employees within the educational system. Examples include contradictions between anti-bullying protections for queer students and lack of employment protection for queer school employees.

Public and private suppression of sexual expression affects not only queer-identified people in the P-20 system, but also prohibits non-queer students, teachers, and educational leaders from being fully informed about the broad spectrum of sexual expression and authentic human experience (Lugg, 2003; Kumashiro, 2000). The

implications of this invisibility are wide-reaching. Students who are educated in public schools rarely see queer representation or affirmation in the educational environment. For many students, colleges and universities offer the first opportunity for authentic gender expression and affirmation of queer culture.

Educational leaders who are queer often experience painful contradictions due to legal constrictions. In the recent past, for instance, school leaders were expected to scrutinize gender performance and sexual orientation, and to remove offending or non-conforming educators from the public arena. The mandate to remove queer teachers and staff members meant that queer educational leaders were frequently in a position of enforced invisibility in order to serve school mandates and maintain their own livelihoods (Lugg, 2003).

However, for school leaders living in states without employment anti-discrimination protections, threats of removal continue to be real, and many individuals are forced to remain closeted. As recently as 2015, only 18 states prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, while 20 states provided no anti-discrimination protections in housing, public accommodation, or schools. The remaining states provide some protections in a range of forms (Human Rights Campaign, 2015).

Within the rapidly changing landscape of rights for queer-identified people in the United States, the educational environment remains an area of personal and professional contradiction and conflict that is slow to change. As of this writing, all states in the United States allow gay marriage². Yet in many states, school leaders can still lose their jobs for

² It is relevant to note that at the beginning conceptualization of this study three years ago, fifteen states allowed gay marriage. This speaks to the rapidly changing political and social environment of queerness.

being openly queer. This personal, professional, and political grey zone is drawing increasing scrutiny and criticism. In 2013, *The Advocate*, a leading source of LGBT news, presented an in-depth report on 11 queer-identified school staff members (teachers, coaches, and principals) who had lost their jobs due to sexual orientation or gender identity expression (*Advocate*, 2013). For queer school leaders, then, the daily lived contradiction between supporting equity and inclusivity in schools, and the lack of queer representation in curricula and leadership models, evokes disconnect, discomfort, anger, and frustration.

Dumaresq, as recently as May 2014, describes the continuing and pervasive fear and discrimination of queer educational leaders. She illuminates the experiences of queer leaders, but also recommends that educational leadership programs incorporate queer inclusive teaching and learning and conduct thorough evaluations of their practices and social justice goals. Dumaresq (2014) also suggests the power of a queer professional network, effectively offering support, legal advice and problem-solving, and raising issues of visibility in their chosen profession.

Yet the barriers limiting definitions of gender as sociological and cultural constructs are rapidly changing. Lugg's historical piece was written in 2003, little more than a decade ago, and the author could not possibly have anticipated how rapidly the global and national movement toward gay marriage and other pivotal political changes would make their way onto the educational landscape.

Queer Theory, Critical Race Theory, Community Cultural Wealth, and Queer Cultural Capital

Queer theory in education. In the existing literature, the need to bridge theory and practice is evident, and few researchers have proposed ways in which theory can

inform programmatic change in education, particularly with respect to queer inclusion (Capper & O'Malley, 2015). Queer theory investigates the intersections of sex, sexuality, and gender, while deconstructing the pervasive normative expectations of heterosexuality and its relationship to social behaviors and power structures (Mayo, 2007; Jean-Marie, Normore & Brooks, 2009). Queer theory has the potential to interact with critical race theory and educational leadership theories to disrupt assumptions about the essential roles of race, class, gender, *and* sexual orientation in schooling. It can be employed to examine the hidden heteronormative curriculum of P-20 schools and educational leadership preparation programs (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006; Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009). Ultimately, a grounding in queer theory perspective can both augment and challenge leadership and critical race theory foundations—while simultaneously being imbued with their content—in a contradictory postmodernist manner.

According to Mayo (2009), queer theory focuses on systems of subjectification that construct understandings of identities related to normative power in dominant culture. In addition, queer theory actualizes the term, “to queer,” in order to “examine places in dominant discourses that are particularly open to the play of meanings that make change, however momentary, possible” (p. 80). In educational spaces, Britzman (1995) offers that queer theory enables “thinking ethically about what discourses of difference, choice and visibility mean in classrooms, in pedagogy, and in how education can be thought about” (p. 152). She asserts that queer theory provokes and disrupts the dominant norms of education, therefore challenging conventional integration patterns of educational systems (Britzman, 1995).

Critical race theory. Critical race theory (CRT) in education is an useful tool for the “deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power” (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 10). According to Tate (1997), CRT is a form of “oppositional scholarship” (p. 196) that emanates from the fact that race and racism remain under-theorized in educational scholarship (Ladson-Billings, 1995). CRT serves as a foundation not only for “challenging the dominant discourse on race and racism” (Solorzano & Yosso, 2001, p. 2), but as a potential springboard for queer theory in education. Just as CRT analyzes the dominant positioning of Whiteness in educational history and educational practices, queer theory can challenge the central position of heteronormativity in schools.

CRT seeks to expose underlying ideologies that have been masked and integrated in the law. Tate (1997) notes that the early CRT movement has both historical and philosophical roots, spreading from the social movements of the 1960s into the legal field to combat institutionalized racism and racial injustice. Queer legal theory has similarly evolved to question and dismantle laws, policies, and practices that have been institutionalized around male dominance, heteronormativity, and legalized discrimination against queerness, especially in education (Renn, 2010).

Tate (1997) explains, “critical race theorists recognize that the way public problems are defined can influence how laws and policies are constructed and interpreted” (p. 218). This pattern is also seen in emerging queer anti-bullying measures, where “the tension between the expansive and restrictive visions of equality is present throughout antidiscrimination law” (Tate, 1997, p. 229).

CRT contains defining elements that, when extrapolated to analyze gender and sexual orientation, can serve to analyze and deconstruct heteronormativity across a variety of institutional systems such as law and education (Tate, 1997). Like racism, heteronormativity is endemic in U.S. society, and is “deeply ingrained legally, culturally, and even psychologically” (Tate, p. 234). Queer theory, again like CRT, can intersect the boundaries of law, feminism, and poststructuralism to assert different ways of knowing and to decenter dominant positionality.

Both CRT and queer theory require historical situation and context, challenging ahistorical analysis. Ladson-Billings (1999) adds, “thinking of race strictly as an ideological concept denies the reality of racialized society and its impact on people in their everyday lives” (p. 9). Modifying the terms “race and racialized” to “gender and genderized” potentially generates the similar understandings of experiences produced outside the heterosexual male norm.

Community cultural wealth. According to Yosso (2005), the examination of funds of knowledge, or “whose knowledge counts and whose knowledge is discounted” (p. 69), is an essential epistemological element of CRT in its intersection with education. Yosso asserts that students of color in the school environment are often perceived as culturally deficient because their unique forms of cultural capital are generally unrecognized and undervalued in education. This reinforces the privileges afforded to those from dominant race, class, and social groupings.

Yosso’s theory of “community cultural wealth” (p. 70), in contrast, highlights the assets that students of color bring with them into the schooling environment, potentially disrupting the dominant normative and “neutral” practices of education. Confronting

deficit theorizing by reframing cultural wealth, Yosso defines cultural capital as “the sense of group consciousness and collective identity that serves as a resource aimed at the advancement of an entire group” (p. 81). Yosso proposes the following strands of community cultural wealth: aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistant capital (p. 79). Both Yosso and Anzaldua (1990) insist upon the value of recognizing community cultural wealth in education for students who have been “traditionally excluded from and silenced by academic research” (Yosso, p. 82).

Queer cultural capital. Yosso’s construction of community cultural wealth may be applied to the queer educational experience. Cultural deficit theorizing is evident, for instance, in anti-bullying laws and school policies regarding queer youth and queer experiences. Pennell (2015) expands Yosso’s six strands of community cultural wealth, adding a seventh strand reflecting queer students and communities: “transgressive capital” (p. 1). Pennell describes her construction of queer cultural capital as “inherently intersectional” (p. 4), supporting recognition of a broader range of queer community cultural wealth.

Pennell (2015) begins with Babcock’s (1978) explanation that a transgression is “any act of expressive behavior which inverts, contradicts, abrogates, or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values and norms be they linguistic, literary or artistic, religious, social and political” (p. 14). She then defines transgressive capital as “the ways in which communities (queer or minoritized groups) proactively challenge and move beyond boundaries that limit and bind them, creating their own reality” (p. 6). Constrictive social and institutional boundaries compel queer

youth and school staff to redefine their own visibility and experiences, which can range from resistance to transformation. Pennell asserts that while educators may be aware of issues facing queer students and the queer community, they are not necessarily educated themselves about how to illustrate and utilize this community's cultural wealth for positive outcomes.

Transformative Learning Theory

Adult transformative learning theory is built upon the idea that “adults have acquired a coherent body of experience—associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses—frames of reference that define their life world” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5). In order to question dominant ideologies, adults are required to examine the foundational messages they have received that shape their networks of belief. These messages may be political, social, cultural, psychological, or class-based. Without deep personal reflection about bias and filters, authority and tradition (typically male, White, and heterosexual) often dictate the lenses through which learning travels. As summarized by Brown (2004), Mezirow argues that “adult learning occurs in four ways – elaborating existing frames of reference, learning frames of reference, transforming points of view, and transforming habits of mind” (p. 85). Critical reflection on beliefs and practices is the essential element of each.

According to Taylor (2007), transformative learning enables adult learners to make meaning of critical self-reflection, supporting paradigm shifts and catalyzing change. Brown (2004) explains that “self-directed learning, critical reflection, experiential learning and learning to learn” (p. 82) are the four primary areas of adult learning. Taylor additionally asserts that motivation, as well as relationships with the

essential elements of transformative experience, bolster adult insight and understanding (2007). Expanding on Mezirow's (1997) initial theory, Taylor suggests that when achieved, transformation is lasting and unalterable, and that learners can be highly motivated to address the social responsibility that underlies change. To support this, Taylor identifies personal learning experiences that "are direct, personally engaging and stimulate reflection upon experience" (p. 182) as powerful tools for transformative learning, describing them as "pedagogical entry points" (p. 183).

Critical race theorist Delgado (1989), in parallel fashion, argues that voice, embodied in narrative stories, can have a direct impact on scholarship, which informs learning. He asserts that stories chronicle experiences and can serve as counter-stories to provide voice for those previously marginalized. These narratives can offer the sorts of pedagogical entry points identified by Taylor (2007). Tate (1997) adds that there is a high potential for counter-stories to change mind-sets. CRT supports counter-storytelling in order to "analyze...the myths, presuppositions, and received wisdoms that make up the common culture" (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p. 12). Employing counter-storytelling using a queer lens could be a catalyzing tool in disrupting dominant narratives of heteronormativity for adult learners. Central to deep understanding and reflection is the practice of "thinking contextually and critically" (Brown, 2004, p. 82), which is essential for critical reflection and epistemological growth. Providing opportunities for exposure to counternarrative about queer experience builds an alternative context while challenging foundational beliefs and biases.

Four Educational Leadership Theories

Educational leadership cannot be investigated without reviewing the theoretical frameworks used to lead, manage, and organize schools. By examining leadership theories that underlie support of curriculum and instruction, delegation and sharing of leadership, and social justice and school transformation, the significance of the leader's role is illuminated.

To understand how existing leadership constructs may inform queer inclusion in schools, four overlapping theories of educational leadership are reviewed: (1) instructional leadership; (2) distributed leadership; (3) social justice leadership; and (4) transformative leadership. This examination identifies how each theoretical framework is potentially useful—yet insufficient on its own—to address the complexities of contemporary educational leadership.

Though he does not employ a critical social lens in his work, Levine (2005) argues that traditional administrator preparation programs are not meeting the increasingly complex pedagogical, economic, and political requirements of educational leadership. After a four-year study of schools of education that surveyed 740 school principals, 5300 education school alumni, and 2200 education school faculty members, he concludes that few of this generation's school leaders are prepared to meet the challenges of revolutionary school reform required for inclusive and equitable schooling in the 21st century (2005). Levine contends that there is a leadership crisis stemming from the lack of rigorous and relevant preparation and curriculum, and a lack of focus on practical application of the leadership role.

The discussion of social justice themes in educational leadership professional development is notably absent in Levine's (2005) critique. Although he outlines a nine-point template for program evaluation (purpose, curricular coherence, curricular balance, faculty composition, admissions, degrees, research, finances, and assessment), Levine neglects to connect program design with social justice leadership theories. This absence is a foundational omission.

Instructional leadership. Building capacity in educational leadership to manage organizational change is a core problem in education—not only in California, but also in the rest of the United States (Elmore, 2008). Elmore examines the particular American attraction to trait leadership, which he describes as “the heroic American tradition of charismatic leadership,” an approach that tends to imbue school leadership with subjectivity, individual taste, and personality (2008, p. 42).

The primary model for educational leadership until the 1980s was instructional leadership, wherein school principals were expected to guide and improve instructional practice in their schools, regardless of their own content area or instructional skill level. Similar to Levine (2005), Elmore (2008) suggests that we cannot any longer rely on educational leaders to have mastered a defined body of professional knowledge, due to the varying professional development and preparation programs that exist, and the wide variety of backgrounds that characterize administrators. In order to have more control and influence over the core functions of schooling, Elmore asserts, educators should not “subscribe to trait theories of competence” (p. 49) that mythologize the dynamic leadership personality. Instead, “deromanticizing leadership would have a very positive

effect on the quality of schools” (Elmore, 2008, p. 57). Although Elmore’s framework is no longer contemporary, the concept of the principal as instructional leader remains.

Horng and Loeb (2010) contend that instructional leaders can have substantial influence over school sites by effectively overseeing teaching in the classroom, supporting healthy environments for teaching and learning, and staffing schools with high functioning personnel. They note, however, that it is impossible for school principals to provide coaching and evaluation sufficient to improve instruction in all content areas. Yet this is the primary goal of the instructional leader. The authors ultimately concede that the traditional instructionally oriented view of leadership, which places emphasis on time spent in the classroom, may no longer be adequate to encompass the demands faced by today’s leaders. Acknowledging the importance of school leadership has therefore led to intensified efforts in both hiring and professional development school leaders (Horng, 2010). Hallinger (2003) writes that over the past two decades, the role of the educational leader in the school environment has shifted dramatically from instructional leadership to transformational leadership. This places the principal in a coaching role, rather than in a central instructional leadership position.

Debate continues about the most suitable role for school leaders. As demographics, politics, and power distributions shift, there may be less need for the principal to serve as the focal point of content expertise, decision-making, authority, and building management (Hallinger, 2003). Yet in order to implement, support, and sustain social justice initiatives for queer-inclusive curriculum and instruction, some level of instructional leadership remains essential, because classroom teaching continues to be the primary method of disseminating knowledge and underlying ideologies.

Distributed leadership. From the early part of the twentieth century until the 1950s, school leadership was largely undistributed. This meant that principals held the majority of power over hiring, professional development, supervising, and delegating to teachers. The concept of distributed leadership, in contrast, implies that leadership practices are broadly distributed among administrators, teacher leaders, and other active personnel in schools. In an effective distributed leadership environment, decisions are said to be made collaboratively. From a distributed leadership perspective, all administrative and instructional responsibilities are not necessarily held centrally by school administrators (Elmore, 2008).

Distributed leadership, as discussed by Silva (2000), implies that teacher leadership, in addition to administrative leadership, is a necessary element of school reform. Distributed leadership offers a counternarrative to the hierarchical structures more traditionally in place for school leadership. Silva points out that teachers are essential in distributed leadership, as they “navigate the structure of schools, nurture relationships, encourage professional growth, help others with change, and challenge the status quo by raising children’s voices” (2000, p. 793). Without effective distributed leadership in schools, it is argued, reform efforts may be unsustainable and easily dismantled.

Reform efforts that arise from social justice theory, in particular, are likely to require distributed approaches to school leadership, since deep change requires pervasive implementation. Leading systemic, school-wide, inclusive change can challenge the “implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives and biases within a

discipline and influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed within it” (Banks & Banks, 1995, p. 157).

Brooks et al. (2007) elaborate: “viewing leadership from a distributed perspective suggests that contextual factors, situational dynamics, individuals and artifacts influence one another to create a protean phenomenon termed *leadership practice*” (p. 379). The authors explain that leadership, if understood through this lens, may be expanded over an entire school structure rather than held by a singular leader, especially in the case of decision-making. Because leadership aims to build meaning and shared purpose with participants in the school community through communication and relationship building, distributed leadership can be an essential component of activating social justice initiatives (Brooks et al., 2007). In contrast to Elmore’s (2008) theory of “trait leadership”, Brooks et al. argue that distributed leadership does not prescribe any specific traits, characteristics, dispositions, attitudes, organizational positions, role or behaviors as leadership, but [is] performed by activist-minded individuals...formal and informal leaders in a fluid manner that fluctuates from situation to situation and over time as an organization evolves (pp. 385, 400).

Social justice leadership. According to Theoharis (2007), it is impossible to disconnect social justice action from social justice leadership in education. He defines social justice leadership as “principals [who] make issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions in the United States central to their advocacy, leadership, practice, and vision” (p. 223). Shields (2008) contends that the term “social justice” should be the core goal of all educational leaders, as it “identifies issues of power and inequity in schools and

society and...challenges personal and systemic abuses of power as well as alienating and marginalizing beliefs, values, and practices” (p. 291). Both Shields and Theoharis advocate that social justice leadership should be at the heart of democratic education, and must guide practice.

These practices, however, can take a toll on leaders who encounter resistance, oppositional power relationships, and burnout from constant engagement in struggle and advocacy. Theoharis (2007) studied 18 principals from various grade levels in urban, rural, and suburban schools, with diverse student populations, ethnic and family backgrounds, and educational experiences. He reports that the work of social justice is often inherent in the character and morality of individual leaders. This contrasts sharply with the nature of their preparation to become school leaders. There is no reference in Theoharis’s (2007) work to any programmatic support or professional development that nurtures the principals’ tenacity or social justice philosophies in a systematic way, whether through pedagogy, curriculum, mentorships, internships, or other programmatic means. Several principals point to church work, activist backgrounds, or personal experience of discrimination as the roots of their commitment to leading for equity and justice.

The foregoing finding parallels Elmore’s (2008) theory of “trait leadership,” then, since it appears that principals have chosen the hard work of social justice in their schools because of who they are as people, not how they have been prepared to do the job. Yet the potential tolls of resistance, struggle, and conflict that accompany the praxis of social justice leadership may require more than a pre-existing disposition. Rethinking social

justice leadership professional development, and developing a transformed framework for leadership preparation are required (Jean-Marie, Normore & Brooks, 2009).

Since social justice leadership denotes *action* (Furman, 2012), leadership theories require actionable outputs. Although there is an emerging body of literature that theorizes social justice leadership and advocacy, Furman points out a lack of scholarship oriented toward practice and preparation, as well as a lack of programmatic focus on the capacities required to activate social justice practices at the school site level. Echoing Jean-Marie, Normore, and Brooks (2009), Furman points out that social justice is an “under-theorized” concept in education (p. 193). However, upon reviewing the literature, Furman (2012) allows that “writings on leadership for social justice—conceptual, normative/prescriptive, and empirical—surface a set of consistent patterns and common themes about the nature of this leadership in schools” (p. 195). It will ultimately be through codifying these patterns that leadership preparation frameworks can be better articulated and implemented.

The recently enacted ISLLC (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium) Standards recommend that social justice be included as a core element of principal preparation programs in order to “prepare aspiring school leaders with the awareness, skills and confidence to address diversity and equity challenges currently that are plaguing public schools in the United States” (Kemp-Graham, 2015, p. 102). School leaders are thus now being called to become activists in the school environment.

Transformative leadership. Shields (2010) proposes that transformative leadership “inextricably links education and educational leadership with the wider social construct within which it is embedded” (p. 559). The fundamental task of the

transformative educational leader, according to Shields, is to question the dominant ideology about the purposes of schooling, what is taught, and how success is measured. Transformative leadership reflects Apple's (1990) call to challenge the hegemony that is embedded in the educational system. In order to create schooling that is more democratic, inclusive, and equitable for students, Shields (2010) argues that leaders must support reform in the broadest social justice context. Like Shields, Bass (1990) describes the transformational leader as one who elevates the goals and objectives of the group, by promoting awareness and belief in the organization's direction.

Supporting innovation, building culture, asking provocative and productive questions, and modeling high expectations are also elements of transformative leadership, as Hallinger (2003) articulates. This type of leadership can have a direct influence on staff perceptions of the school environment, their ability to affect and sustain school reform, and the degree to which second-order change is initiated (Hallinger, 2003).

Similar to Elmore's (2004) description of trait leadership theory, Bass (1990) notes that transformational leaders are often characterized by the following attributes: "charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration" (p. 22). In contrast to trait leadership theory, Bass implies that while these transformational leadership qualities are not necessarily inherent in the individual leader, they can be learned, supported, and evaluated in leaders to build leadership capacity. If so, then preparing school leaders for transformative leadership could become an integral part of educational leader preparation programs.

Students require leaders who have been prepared to intervene at the forefront of cultural change, and are equipped with the foundational understandings, skills, advocacy,

and courage to support culturally responsive teaching and learning, climate and engagement, and school and community partnerships (Cooper, 2010). Transformative educational leadership involves “self-reflection, systematically analyzing schools...then confronting inequities regarding race, class, gender, language, ability and/or sexual orientation” (p. 696). Multiple scholars contend that transformative educational leadership is inherently activist-oriented (Cooper, 2010; Furman, 2010; Theoharis, 2007) because leadership in this field is a political and moral endeavor (Cooper, 2010).

Queering Principal Preparation

Recent research analyzes and critiques institutional homophobic norms embedded in administrator preparation programs in higher education. In such programs, sexual orientation is consistently overlooked as a significant form of “diversity” to be addressed by school leaders. Jennings (2012) compares 55 educational administration programs at public universities in seven states to profile program priorities and methods. When coordinators rank topics of study in terms of importance, sexual orientation is assigned the lowest priority. In addition, 59.5% of the programs studied do not address sexual orientation at all as part of the curriculum (p. 9).

Reasons given for this lack of emphasis are insufficient experience and knowledge on the part of program faculty, greater importance of other topics of diversity, and student and faculty indifference, discomfort, or resistance. Additionally, 17% of the programs that do not include sexual orientation as a topic of study report that it is a “non-issue” (p. 10). Programmatic invisibility of issues related to sexual orientation is thus pervasive in the curriculum and instruction of the educational leadership preparation programs examined by Jennings (2012).

Of those programs that do include sexual orientation as a content area, 88.9% focus primarily on LGBT students as an at-risk population, addressing legal issues related to school staff, children, families, and curriculum (Jennings, 2012). Such an approach essentializes and reinforces the “victim” perception of queer staff, students, and their families. Only 5.6% of the preparation programs in the study include affirming and inclusive curriculum, such as progress made by LGBT people in academic fields (p. 11). Jennings (2012) notes that “efforts to eliminate homophobia and heterosexism benefit all students, not just those who identify as lesbian or gay, or come from sexual minority homes” (p. 3).

In the most relevant research identified to date, O’Malley and Capper (2015) report on how aspiring principals are prepared for social justice leadership, with specific attention on LGBTIQ inclusion. The researchers surveyed 218 faculty in 53 Educational Administration programs—some had a declared social justice focus, others did not. The study reports that LGBTIQ inclusion in social justice-identified principal preparation programs remains marginalized and only infrequently addressed. Programs often depend on a particular faculty member, as opposed to integrating LGBTIQ issues throughout the curriculum.

In an analysis across the 12 most prominent research strands in educational leadership as reported in the literature, O’Malley and Capper (2015) conclude that “preparing leaders for social justice and concomitantly integrating LGBTIQ identity in leadership preparation is relevant across all 12 of the identified research strands” (p. 5). They add that in their review of literature on principal preparation, LGBTIQ representation is minimal, or frequently lacking all together (O’Malley & Capper, 2015).

To offer needed activities and strategies for integrating LGBT topics into educational leadership courses, O'Malley and Capper (2006) advance a leader preparation framework that encompasses curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment to support emotional risk-taking for future school leaders (p. 144). Understanding the importance of addressing LGBT topics in educational leadership curriculum is presented as a foundational aspect of this framework. So too is developing an understanding of appropriate language and phrasing when discussing LGBT topics (p. 145). Pedagogical strategies under the authors' proposed framework are developed using adult transformative learning theory, which includes building knowledge and awareness through exposure, reflection, and sharing. Panel discussions and case studies are also included to connect relevance to learning (p. 146.)

Capper et al. (2006) recommend an "LGBT equity audit" as a way of reviewing school policies, curricula, knowledge of current laws, use of language and terminology in records and forms, and levels of inclusion in social rituals and activities (p. 146). Conducting such an audit, they argue, can serve to raise awareness on the part of future school leaders about potential LGBT invisibilities and inequities in their practice.

Kemp-Graham (2015) reports on a study of 106 university graduates from a principal preparation program in Texas. Findings from a survey using the author's "Diversity & Oppression Scale" reveal continuing marginalization of queer issues, understanding, and awareness. Notably, only 48% of study participants respond with "agree" to the following question: "I feel confident about my knowledge and understanding of gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions" (p. 111). In addition, 57% of the participants respond

with “agree” to the statement, “Being lesbian, bisexual, or gay is a choice” (p. 112). Reflecting prevailing gender and orientation norms, the survey offered only binary gender options for participants, and lacked questions regarding sexual orientation or gender identity.

Kemp-Graham (2015) concludes that even the most recently prepared principals lack “a firm understanding of institutional oppression and the misuse of power that constrain human and legal rights of individuals and groups in society” (p. 123). One recommendation made is for students to engage in authentic dialog about marginalization and oppression within a safe environment, with peers who support self-reflection and critical understanding (p. 125).

In addition to weak coverage and resistance to including sexual orientation in educational leadership preparation programs, there is also resistance to bringing LGBT professional development into the school environment itself. When school principals are offered free professional development on queer inclusion through the Reduction of Stigma in Schools (RSIS) program through Syracuse University, Payne and Smith (2013) identify varying but consistent levels of resistance to bringing the professional development to school staff. RSIS is designed to “help educators...recognize how gender norms and heteronormative structures operate in school environments...and recognize and disrupt patterns of marginalization” (p. 3).

Payne and Smith (2013) report that the majority of the 39 educators they questioned have fears about the “appropriateness” of providing a focus on sexual orientation in schools. The educators do not understand how or why LGBTQ issues could be considered relevant to curriculum, instruction, and culture in schools (p. 5). “The

implicit conceptual links between sexual orientation and sexual activity have led many to avoid addressing LGBTQ topics altogether in school spaces” (p. 16). These data suggest that principals felt justified in using their students’ age and taboos around sexuality and youth to avoid dialogue about the spectrum of sexuality and gender expression.

Many principal respondents in Payne and Smith’s (2013) study see LGBTQ students as a problem to be dealt with, reflecting deficit thinking about this population. LGBTQ students themselves report in the study that they view school administrators as key barriers to LGBT inclusion in their schools (p. 5). The study further notes that many administrators—acting as role models responsible for guiding school culture and inclusive practices—are uncomfortable even using words to define queer identity or experience; instead, they frequently use “othering” language that distances and victimizes students and families (p. 12).

Many of the principals studied by Payne and Smith (2013) position themselves as “neutral,” resulting in the preservation of the conservative nature of their schools or communities. They see refusing to take action to advocate for marginalized populations as a way to avoid conflict with teachers, parents, and the larger community. Many schools and districts are reported to have actual policies in place requiring “neutrality.”

Such policies fail to recognize that ‘neutrality’ is not possible as heterosexuality and expectations for gender conformity are an integral part of school life K-12, constantly taught and reinforced through institutional structure, formal and informal curriculum, school social events, and interpersonal relations (Payne & Smith, p. 21).

The foregoing examination of the literature on instructional leadership, distributed leadership, social justice leadership, and transformational leadership suggests that elements of each framework can potentially be employed to support the demanding role of the contemporary educational leader. When considering the focus of this study—leadership to support inclusion of queer experience in education—it is likely that the social justice and transformative leadership frameworks offer the greatest potential to serve as foundational theoretical structures. There is therefore a need in the field of educational leadership to investigate further the application of these structures to support the study's goal of an approach to queer inclusion that interrogates and deconstructs the hegemony of the educational system as it maintains institutionalized bias, discrimination, and even violence.

While emerging scholars are beginning to articulate the need to remake school leadership preparation programs with a social justice framework that supports LGBTIQ inclusion, relatively few have offered practical pedagogical recommendations. The most relevant frameworks to date have been presented by Capper (2006), Capper and Theoharis (2006), and Capper and O'Malley (2015). Despite data reflecting the continuing marginalization of queer issues in administrative preparation programs, and the development of new ISLLC Standards for school leader preparation in social justice, this review of literature suggests that significant leadership preparation program reforms to support queer inclusion are not yet under way.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology design, participants, instrumentation, and data collection and analysis appropriate for responding to the research question, “What are promising leadership practices in education that support inclusion of queer experience?”

This study employs a multiple case study transformative design methodology (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) that is shaped by leadership and social justice theoretical frameworks. Using a transformative design enables me specifically to frame the collection and analysis of data gathered to identify and challenge facilitators and barriers to queer inclusion in schools, and the principal’s role in those practices. Maintaining the lens of transformative leadership and queer inclusion throughout the research study centers the data collection and coding. Subsequent analysis of leadership practices that transform practices in the secondary schools is accomplished via the coding procedures.

Participants selected represent variation in school size and structure, school and community demographics, social and political climate, and educational support structures and systems. However, all of the schools are situated in Northern California, and hence are bound to the same state requirements for secondary curriculum standards and external assessment, employment and anti-discrimination laws, and state-wide student anti-bullying and inclusion laws and policies. Gaining access to school administrators and teacher participants was accomplished through the recommendations of local educational professionals.

I purposefully selected school administrators who self-identify as heterosexual. By removing the implication that queer advocacy or social justice work must be done

primarily by queer activists, I sought to identify practices that could be generalized to all administrators. Queer community allies such as those included in this study have extensive navigational responsibility in building solidarity for the minority group. By focusing on the leadership strategies of non-queer school leaders, I aimed to target attributes that could be generalizable. Several years ago I interviewed three queer high school principals who articulated the difficult positionality of advocating for queer youth while struggling with their own public and professional identities. As is the case with other advocates from marginalized populations, they held back frequently out of personal concern for having their work discounted or demeaned due to their membership in the queer community. To avoid this potential barrier, I selected non-queer identified school leaders.

Ethics and Protection of Human Subjects

Review board approval. This study has been classified as exempt under San Francisco State University IRB guidelines.

Professional considerations. For many school leaders, professional and personal boundaries blur under the intense public scrutiny that can accompany leadership positions in public education. Careful consideration was therefore to be given to maintaining confidentiality around particular challenges with the school public, or with issues that might be politically charged. My own experience as a school leader provided insider understanding of the professional challenges faced by participants, and intimate insight into the facilitators and barriers of such work from within and outside of the school site.

Role of the Researcher

As a former public school principal and a queer researcher, my role in this research is specifically positioned. However, the subjects for my case studies and focus groups are schools, principals, and teachers I have not worked for previously, and they are known to me by recommendation and community reputation.

Validity

Case studies provide the opportunity for pattern-matching and generalization based on causal explanations that are supported by evidence (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Validity in the study is supported by using standardized definitions throughout my data analysis, which serve to operationalize elements of leadership and queer theory, in particular, into interpretation of educational practice. This provides a level of construct validity, as described by Cohen et al. (2011) to mean acceptable operationalizing of constructions and terms appropriate to the research (Cohen et al, 2011). Concurrent validity is supported through the comparison of multiple sources in response to research questions and interview and focus group protocols; the data were therefore triangulated. External validity is secondary, since generalizing behaviors, attributes, and practices from a small sample set to others in the population (school principals) is difficult, even though potentially desired. Discerning “promising practices,” therefore, is the aim, as opposed to generalizing practices over a broad range of educational leadership contexts.

Data Analysis Procedures

Instrumentation

Over six months, I interviewed three school administrators throughout this exploratory multiple case study design investigation. I also incorporated teacher and adult secondary student focus groups in order to triangulate data points and themes.

The semi-structured interview protocol for school leaders contains questions that seek to illuminate experiences in leadership preparation, personal and professional advocacy for social justice in the educational realm, policies and procedures of the internal and external systems principals are working within, and facilitators and barriers to queer inclusion in schools. A focus group protocol centers on the relationship and role of the principal to teacher and student support, and the systemic facilitators and barriers to queer inclusion. In order to validate experiences and triangulate data, focus group data and follow up interview questions with students (over the age of 18) provide an added opportunity to interpret how leaders enact queer-specific social justice reforms in their schools.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted that consisted of open-ended questions related to the following topics that emerged as a result of the literature review:

- Leadership theories: instructional, distributed, social justice and transformative experiences and practices
- Queer inclusion in the school curriculum, school climate, professional development for staff, community engagement, and related issues
- Experiences with principal preparation programs in relation to social justice and queer inclusion

After interviews with site administrators, site visits and focus groups with teachers and adult students supported triangulation of data via themes that emerged through the interview process.

Interview data were audio recorded for the following reasons: to focus on the relationship of the interviewer and interviewees; and to enable conservation of the participants' experiences, connections, and challenges for subsequent repeated review and analysis. Transcribing and coding the interviews took place after each cycle of interviewing, to accurately record the participants' data, and also to enable follow up questions and clarification.

First and second cycle coding were used to identify themes and categories for further analysis of data (Creswell, 2011). The final process in the analysis of interview and observational data came with the comparison of findings with the literature, and the subsequent formation of a conceptual framework reflecting the synthesis of theory and data.

First cycle coding of interviews and focus groups, generated the initial categories used to signify codes in the research (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Beginning with a priori coding, I used Furman's (2012) six attributes of social justice leader to discern which qualities were exhibited in the interviews with the three school leaders. Second cycle coding involved *in vivo* coding, process coding and attribute coding applied simultaneously, as my particular focus was on school and leadership practices and processes, leadership attributes, and personal interaction with the research themes. Other coding categories emerged throughout the process, supporting more inductive coding. After initial segments of data were categorized during first cycle coding, second cycle

coding was used to shape the data chunks into relevant themes for further analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). Pattern codes served to explain causes and underlying process, illuminate relationships among people in the school setting, and connect school processes and leadership to the theoretical constructs identified in the study's literature review (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014).

Reflective conversations among school principals and the researcher during the course of the study enabled the sharing of experiences and learning from each other's promising practices, which is a goal of this study.

School Staff Focus Groups

All members of a school staff are integral to the experience of students and adults in the school environment. Teachers, counselors, campus security, and other essential personnel from each of the three case study schools were invited to participate in a focus group to respond to prompts regarding the role of their school administrators regarding queer inclusion in their schools. These participants were asked to respond to questions about policies and practices, as well as relationships with staff and students, and queer inclusive leadership practices, disruption of discriminatory practices, and distribution of responsibility for school culture and climate. Additionally, they were asked to describe any formal or informal professional development or learning opportunities they participated in at their school sites.

Many of the teacher and staff participants were educated at a local public research university, a selective and progressive space that for the most part recognizes the importance of queer inclusivity and its place in social justice education. This shaped a unique group of teachers with particular interest and focus in social justice education.

The three focus groups were different from each other. The group from Revolution High School was a dedicated, serious, and passionate group of teachers and counselors, ranging in experience from first-year to veteran teachers. Their commitment and connection to their students was evident in their thoughtful responses and frustration over a previous principal who had negatively impacted the school.

Table 1

Staff and teacher Focus Group Participants

Revolution High School

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Years in education</u>	<u>Best way to connect with students</u>
AJ	Teacher	9	<i>Be authentic and be honest, and create an environment that allows your students to be the same, regardless of the class or subject matter.</i>
Ilya	Counselor	4	<i>I connect with students best by getting to know them.</i>
Sophia	Teacher	1	<i>I'm just learning how to do this!</i>
Levi	Teacher	4	<i>Address their needs (academic/social-emotional/physical safety) and interests.</i>
Kristina	Teacher	7	<i>Make yourself available to them both academically, and emotionally.</i>
Lorena	Teacher	3	<i>If you want to connect with students, you need to show them that you care about them.</i>

Alder High School had a similarly energetic and dedicated group of teachers and counselors. Having an unusually experienced staff, the team at Alder has worked together for years on several of the issues that discussed in the focus group. They provided the history of change at Alder, as well as their roles in that change. Since their principal had been at the school since Alder's inception, they reported that they had worked collaboratively for over a decade to accomplish the environment of inclusivity that had been established at the school.

Table 2

*Staff and teacher Focus Group Participants*Alder High School

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Years in education</u>	<u>Best way to connect with students</u>
Layla	Counselor	12	<i>Community activities, talking to kids at lunch, when they're in the office. I have the best conversations when things are casual.</i>
Necie	Teacher	4	<i>Showing support to specific student groups and working together towards a common goal create lasting bonds that continue beyond the class room and high school years.</i>
Lynn	Teacher	13	<i>Listen, and don't be afraid to be goofy.</i>
Billy	Teacher	5	<i>Be authentic. Students respect authenticity.</i>

The group from Bay High School, consisting of counselors, a campus supervisor, and several teachers, revealed less detail about their relationship with leadership and was more guarded and vague regarding their specific relationships with students. As a group, they were willing to participate, but their participation felt obligatory and rushed, as compared to the other two groups.

Table 3

*Staff and teacher Focus Group Participants*Bay High School

<u>Name</u>	<u>Position</u>	<u>Years in education</u>	<u>Best way to connect with students</u>
Irma	Counselor	13	<i>In person.</i>
Yan	Counselor	7	<i>Try to make a personal connection.</i>
Larry	Campus supervisor	8	<i>Get to know students' interests.</i>
Mateo	Teacher	11	<i>Students need to know you care.</i>
Amie	Teacher	20	<i>Being there for them.</i>

Student Focus Groups

Student focus groups from the three case study high schools consisted of 18-year-old students from a variety of demographic, ethnic, gender, economic, and sexuality identities (see Table 4). The majority of the students have grown up in the local area, with only several coming from neighboring cities, and one from outside of California. Notably, there were a spectrum of gender and sexual identities in the student groups, as particular students were recommended to participate.

Table 4

Student Focus Group Participants

Revolution High School

<u>Student</u>	<u>Gender/sexual identity</u>	<u>Interests</u>	<u>Favorite quality (self)</u>
Izzy	Non-binary	Reading, video games	<i>Being able to smile and laugh even when I don't feel too great.</i>
Maggie	Female/lesbian	QSA, Women's studies	<i>I am always there for the people I care about.</i>
Alisa	Female/not disclosed	Soccer, singing	<i>Honesty</i>
Louis	Male/not disclosed	Acting, baking, art	<i>I give awesome hugs.</i>

Bay High School

Ixchel	Female/queer	Interact club	<i>I love music and the beach.</i>
Angela	Female/queer	QSA	<i>My leadership skills!</i>
Rosie	Female/bi	Leadership, soccer	<i>I am very interested in government and policies.</i>
Max	Male/non-disclosed	Politics	<i>I care about what's going on for other people.</i>
Arvin	Male/gay	QSA	<i>Just trying to graduate!</i>

<u>Alder High School</u>			
Celine	Female/Trans	Fashion, theater	<i>Being real with people.</i>
Henry	Male/straight	Regional Ethics Bowl	<i>My ability to challenge myself to improve.</i>
Mattie	Female/queer	Leadership, QSA	<i>I am trying to make the world a better place.</i>

These students were generally student leaders or members of their schools' Queer Straight Alliance or Gay Straight Alliance clubs. Self-reporting gender and sexuality was offered to them as an option. I noticed upon interviewing the students that school staff who assisted with identifying student participants for this study selected students who appeared to be involved in queer inclusion at their schools, or who were already sensitized to the issue, as opposed to students in the general population who might have been able to speak to the visibility or invisibility of queer inclusion from an unrelated vantage point. Although I did not request this, it seemed the natural inclination of the staff to select these students. Although not a conscious decision, this may be evidence of the continuing assumption that only the queer or queer ally population can speak to these issues on campus, or is interested in them.

Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

Particularly in those fairly vulnerable and fragile teenage years, we want to be seen as an individual. We want to be known, and we want to be acknowledged.
(Gayle, Principal, Revolution HS)

School leaders are working in some of the most challenging conditions imaginable. Accountability measures, funding, struggles for resources, and maintaining coherent instructional practices with shifting personnel and student populations all make it challenging to investigate leadership impact. As school leaders seek to transition from school managers to social justice-oriented leaders, changing political paradigms and mandates often outpace administrative preparation, school structures, and norms.

Social justice leadership requires action, intentionality, and skill. Transformative social justice leadership is complex, requiring that the essential undertaking of the educational leader is to question the dominant ideology about the purposes of schooling, what is taught, and how success is measured (Shields, 2010). The school principals at the center of this study demonstrate how reflective personal practice, authentic interpersonal engagement, and proactive disruption of institutionalized practices can support queer inclusion in schools.

The grounding of these study findings in affirmative—as opposed to deficit-focused—attributes of queer inclusion is deliberate. Multiple surveys, research findings, programs, and interventions already exist that focus on anti-bullying reforms and anti-discrimination work with queer populations. While such efforts may have value, they also reflect a deficit-based, victim narrative of queer communities. In contrast, research focusing on proactive, progressive—even disruptive—aspects of queer-inclusive leadership is seldom found. Furman (2012) describes deficit thinking as a “countervailing

pressure” (p. 198) that can act as a barrier to social justice leadership. Similarly, Jennings (2012) observes that in studies of 55 educational leadership administration programs nationally, 88.9% of them characterize LGBT students as an at-risk population—thus employing a deficit model.

School leaders, therefore, can benefit from research that identifies promising practices and transformative behaviors that will enable queer inclusive work to move beyond the deficit-based limits of anti-bullying and harassment. Accordingly, this study focuses on reflective methods and systems that work proactively to achieve queer inclusion in schools. The actual skills and behaviors that have been demonstrated through these school case studies of principals, school staff and students exemplify those methods in four distinct categories.

This chapter, like Chapter One, is organized in terms of four themes: Personal Connection; Interpersonal Engagement; Challenging Policies and Structures; and Instructional Engagement. The initial theme of Personal Connection describes how educational leaders learn formally and informally from others, and through reflective practice. The Interpersonal Engagement theme illuminates the impact of relationships and dialogue on students, staff, parents, and community partners. The theme of Challenging Policies and Structures discusses the physical, legal, and organizational frameworks of schools, ranging from student information systems to school policies, facilities, and distributed leadership structures. Finally, the theme of Instructional Engagement examines the leader’s role in implementing socially just pedagogies that support curriculum implementation, professional development, and accountability.

Case Study Schools and Participants

Compared to the rest of the country, Northern California is sometimes viewed as an area of relatively progressive social and educational practices and philosophies. The three secondary schools selected for case studies are located in the San Francisco Bay Area, and are all bound by the same standards, legal requirements, and funding mandates. Narrowing external factors enhances the study's capacity to compare and contrast leadership practices and their impacts on queer inclusion. By locating the three case study schools within the same region, external variables are limited, and common promising practices are more readily highlighted. The three schools represented in this study do not differ significantly in demographic population than other schools in the region, although anecdotally, students and school staff believe that their population of queer students is higher than in other local schools.

These case study schools and educational leader participants represent the best of all possible worlds for this particular study. They are located in a generally progressive region, and in school districts that are actively seeking to expand their educational work around social justice themes. The majority of the teachers in the area self-select to work in this region due to the progressive political and social culture, despite a lower pay scale compared with neighboring regions.

Selecting high school administrators for this study proved more challenging than expected. Several potential participants were hesitant to address openly issues of queer inclusion in schools, citing reasons ranging from "I haven't really done anything important," to "This is a very conservative school and I'm not yet established enough to broach the issue publicly." It became evident that professional restrictions reflecting the

historical roots of homophobia in schools are still alive, as I searched for leaders who would share their praxis of queering school communities. By selecting leaders who were non queer-identified, I aimed to focus on leadership skills and attributes which could not be conflated with self-advocacy or self-preservation as members of a marginalized community.

Profiles of Secondary School Administrators and Their Schools

Young people are so intuitive. They know whether you accept them. They know whether you care for them or love them or celebrate them or are just joyful about them. They know. (Gayle, Revolution Alternative High School Principal)

Gayle. She is the principal of Revolution High School, and is a lively, thoughtful, and kind woman toward the end of her administrative career. She grew up in the local area, and as a credentialed teacher, had the unique experience of teaching elementary, middle, and high school in English, social studies, math, and self-contained classrooms. Gayle obtained her administrative credential at a private university in the area in the early 1990s, and she has been a school administrator for almost a quarter century, leading elementary, secondary, and alternative schools. Now nearing retirement, she has not slowed in her pursuit of learning and advocating for students.

As a part of her long career in education, Gayle has served on a curriculum and instruction council for a well-known professional education organization, been involved in the local chamber of commerce, worked for anti-violence groups in the region, taught at a local community college, and acted as a consultant and representative for several agencies dedicated to health, education, and advocacy. Twice in her career, Gayle was awarded the Administrator of the Year award by a professional organization. Staff who

work with Gayle describe her as nurturing, supportive, and overwhelmingly compassionate.

Revolution High School is a small, independent charter school serving grades 10-12. The school's website states: "*Revolution High School serves students who have not experienced success in other high schools.*" The school has fewer than 120 students, and the major demographic groups are White (58%), Latino (31%), and Black (5%). The English Learner population of Revolution High School is around 8%, and Free and Reduced Meals enrollment is 33% (www.ed-data.k12.ca.us, 2016). There are one principal, one counselor, and seven teachers who teach all core subjects in generally multi-graded classrooms. The teachers also teach electives, facilitate clubs and activities, and serve in leadership positions around the small school.

Being a school administrator is often a thankless and difficult job, with limited positive student contact, and time-consuming accountability regimes. Many teachers call it "going to the dark side." When asked her reason for becoming an administrator, Gayle replies:

One of the reasons that I left the classroom was that I saw that there were certain students that were not being served, or being misserved, and I wanted to be able to take what I felt I was able to bring to the classroom and have that impact the entire school and make sure that those students were not left behind, or that they were not negatively impacted at all. (Gayle, Revolution HS)

Gayle's response exemplifies the motivation of a social justice leader, and frames her experience.

Bernie. He serves as the principal of Alder Charter High School. He is energetically friendly and outwardly positive, describing himself as an "old surfer" who grew up in the county where he now works. Bernie has served in a variety of capacities

during his long career, starting with teaching English. He received his administrative credential in 2002 from a local state university. Before becoming the founding principal of Alder 13 years ago, he was an assistant principal at a local high school and middle school. Bernie serves on a variety of community agencies that address youth violence, foster youth services, drug and alcohol issues, veteran support, and new teachers. He has received multiple leadership awards as a community volunteer, administrator of the year, and Community Hero from the United Way. Bernie is recognized by his teachers and students as supportive, warm, and caring.

Why fit in when you were born to stand out? It's definitely our school. People ask me all the time, "What kind of kid comes here?" (Bernie, Principal Alder Charter High School)

Alder Charter High School is a small charter school serving grades 9-12. Of the school's 157 students, 71% are White, 15% are Latino, and 5% identify as mixed race. It has a small enrollment of English Language learners, and only 15% Free and Reduced Meals enrollment. Similar to Revolution High School, Alder has one principal, one counselor, and 12 teachers who serve in various leadership capacities.

A unique aspect of this study is the fact that Bernie and Gayle are married. As high school principals in the same county and at the same educational grade level, they share resources, professional development interests, and educational challenges. They are both dedicated to safe and welcoming school environments and are committed to the well-being and mental health of their students. Having a professional and personal partnership has pushed Bernie and Gayle to advance in their careers as educational leaders, and they are well known in the communities where they live and work.

Marie. She grew up in a city less than an hour from Bay High School and began her educational career teaching Social Studies. She received her administrative credential from the same local state university as Bernie in 2000, and her master's in education the following year. Marie has been a school administrator for six years, and has served as the assistant principal of Bay High School for four years. Next year she will become principal at Bay High School, and she feels personally and professionally ready to take on the position. Marie has served as the area president for a national educational administration organization, and was nominated for an award as an ally to queer youth in 2001 and 2008. She currently oversees the counseling and guidance department at her school, and serves as a faculty advisor for the Queer Straight Alliance (QSA).

I'm a problem solver. So if I'm trying to see what's right in the world and I see something's wrong in the world, then I'm going to figure out what to do. (Marie, Assistant Principal, Bay High School)

Students and staff describe Marie as an excellent communicator who is organized and professional. Marie is also known to be quick-witted, decisive, and intelligent, at times moving past those around her if they do not move quickly, are passive, or do not share her sense of social justice.

Bay High School is a fairly large comprehensive public high school serving grades 9-12. It has over 1,000 students, with the major demographic groups comprised of 52% Latino, 39% White, and 3% Asian. The English Learner population of Bay High School is 12%, and Free and Reduced Meals enrollment is 56% (www.ed-data.k12.ca.us, 2016). There are one principal, two assistant principals, three counselors, and a variety of on-site support staff including activity and athletic directors, a community liaison, and a school psychologist. Bay High School has 45 teachers, as well as a variety of school

services and associated staff ranging from ROP classes to health services and Special Education.

All three schools described here are informally recognized for their “alternative” and welcoming school climates—as a haven for students who do not feel comfortable at large, comprehensive public schools. Students at Alder remark that they are called “the gay school,” and for this reason students seek Alder out for placement (Student focus group, 2016). Similarly, Marie at Bay commented that her school receives dozens of requests for interdistrict transfers from students outside of the school boundary who feel ostracized in their home schools and wish to come to a more queer-friendly environment. Students at Alder and Revolution recognize their schools’ unique leadership and school climates, and have intentionally chosen to attend these schools.

Personal Connection

The theme of personal connection describes the intimate processes of building leadership skills. Findings in this section outline three areas: experiential learning, generational learning, and critical self-reflection.

Taylor (2007) describes personal learning experiences as “direct, personally engaging and stimulating reflection upon experience.” They serve as “pedagogical entry points” (p.183) to enable transformative change. The leaders in this study open themselves up to learning experiences from students, staff members, community organizations, and other school leaders to broaden understanding of social justice issues, and to enhance communication and understanding. Students, teachers, and administrators form a three-level generational understanding of school environments bounded by experience. Gayle, Bernie, and Marie describe numerous ways in which traditional top-

down learning patterns are reversed or blended in their schools, queering and disrupting traditional directional patterns of learning as students frequently educate them and their faculties on evolving queer culture and issues.

Many high school students share examples of counter-storytelling and the importance of having their experiences legitimized by school leaders whom they perceive as effective and compassionate. The validation of student life experience—queer or otherwise—improves school culture and enhances feelings of safety and belonging. There is forgiveness and understanding on the part of students when adults “make mistakes” about such things as preferred pronoun usage or terms for gender experience, or when they fall back into old patterns of saying things like “ladies and gentleman” to start a class session.

Yet students are less forgiving when adults fail to acknowledge their own experiential gaps or growth opportunities. The more accessible and admittedly fallible the leaders and faculty are, the safer and more comfortable students feel at school.

Experiential Learning

Preparing for a social justice role. None of the administrators in this study received explicit preparation for implementing social justice practices while in their administrative preparation programs. Although they knew they were preparing for an essential role in educational leadership, Bernie, Gayle, and Marie report that their preparation programs covered social justice only minimally, or at most in broad strokes. Mirroring the research literature, a focus on gender and sexuality issues was absent, even in programs with a “social justice focus,” like Gayle’s. As Bernie recounts, specific content on student resiliency and social justice came only through outside speakers and

guests, and was not addressed by program faculty as core content. Although Shields (2010) and Theoharis (2007) recommend that social justice leadership be situated at the forefront of education, interview responses in this study pinpoint a lack of focus on social justice in leadership preparation.

Both Bernie and Gayle completed their leadership preparation programs in the 1980s. Bernie describes his program as “old school”—it still modeled the professional development of school leaders on business management practices. Marie’s experience, though more recent by two decades, likewise made few connections to social justice themes.

There was no social justice. It was all budget, HR, how to run meetings, that kind of stuff. It wasn't very student-focused...so I would say no training about social justice. (Marie, Bay HS)

So the ideas of social justice and the populations we were looking at...were not as broad or inclusive as looking at gender equity or looking at fairness to our young people. I did get my master's in educational leadership from (university) and they are founded upon social justice, so the idea of social justice and ethics is threaded throughout the education, and I've always found that students there either take advantage of that, or just move through it. (Gayle, Revolution HS)

There were bits and pieces scattered throughout. I think the most of what I got came from guest appearances... (Bernie, Alder HS)

In order for leaders to support equitable academic outcomes for all students—regardless of class, race, gender, language, cultural identity, sexual orientation, or sexual identity—they must gain relevant knowledge and experience. Yet the administrator preparation programs experienced by study participants, which should have delivered this support, were not helpful in this area.

In contrast, teachers and staff members recall a variety of experiences with social justice professional development and queer inclusion in their preparation programs. A majority of the participants received their professional development at a nearby University of California campus, where “LGBT issues were talked about and focused on” (Necie, Teacher at Alder HS). Teacher preparation programs contained background about laws and policies related to queer students and their families, the impacts of school groups and structures like the GSA (Gay Straight Alliance)/QSA (Queer Straight Alliance), and how to work with external support groups like the LGBTIQ Center and PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays).

On the other hand, one teacher who received her credential through an online program does not recall any mention of social justice or queer issues. One of the counselors notes that her program contains many opportunities for dialoguing and study regarding queer issues, and that she intends to write about queer issues in her master’s thesis. Yet she reports that she has never heard of queer theory—that it is not discussed in her program. Teachers and counselors generally appear to have selected their preparation programs due to a stated or assumed focus on social justice. Within those programs, though, queer issues were embedded unevenly, yet still more consistently than in the preparation programs described by the administrators.

The foregoing finding aligns with recent work by Capper and O’Malley (2015) and Capper, Theoharis, and Sebastian (2006), which reports that queer issues are seldom treated in leadership preparation programs. My findings are consistent with those of Capper and O’Malley (2015). This suggests that even in programs with a social justice focus, queer issues are resisted, remaining sidelined due to lack of faculty comfort and

knowledge, educational resources, and implicit bias in program structures (Jennings, 2012).

Critical reflection on praxis. Gayle and Bernie have the advantage of a close personal relationship that enables them to constructively examine their roles as leaders. They serve as one another's critical colleagues and peer supports. Freire (1971) reminds educational practitioners that transformative action requires collaborative critical reflection and dialogue:

A revolutionary leadership must . . . practice co-intentional education . . . as they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators. In this way, the presence of the oppressed in the struggle for their liberation will be what it should be: not pseudo-participation, but committed involvement (p. 69).

Brown (2004) notes that “effective leaders take responsibility for their learning, share a vision for what can be, assess their own assumptions and beliefs, and understand the structural and organic nature of schools (p. 78). Without opportunities to analyze and share leadership practice, however, professional growth is inhibited, and leaders operate in silos.

Although Marie's district requires her to attend four district-wide meetings per month, those events contain mostly “administrivia”—information on accountability measures, current mandates, and budgeting or human resources timelines. Occasionally, Marie's district leadership meetings feature discussion sessions or critical friends protocols, but this is the exception. Leadership meetings at her school site are also held weekly. At these meetings her team members discuss site-level concerns such as policies, professional development planning, students of concern, and practices of teaching and learning. The sharing of best practices on student inclusion and support for students

routinely falls to the bottom of the list—behind teacher evaluations, union concerns, college and career planning, and numerous other district mandates and school goals.

Evaluating and sharing promising practice is thus left to individual leaders to work through informally, as time allows. The lack of priority placed on critical reflection and dialogue about praxis among school leaders therefore weakens transformative processes.

Generational Learning

Millennial youths' understandings of sexual orientation and diversity reflect growing challenges to binary gender determination. *Fusion*, a media outlet for contemporary youth activists and advocates, conducted a survey of 1,000 millennials between the ages of 18-34 in 2015 on topics of gender, race, and politics. Results indicate that 50% of respondents understand gender to exist on a spectrum, and that "some people fall outside conventional categories" (Fusion.net, 2015). According to student focus group participants in this study, the current millennial generation expects prior generations to expand and change along with them.

I mean, I think the problem is there needs to be a push towards the adults that work with students seeing as a responsibility of theirs to keep educated because I think a lot of the times, experiences from teachers and administrators, they act like it's so difficult to learn. They act like it's no more their responsibility than it would be anyone else's. (Angela, Student, Bay HS)

And if we can only have that attitude of listening and learning because, boy, they teach me every day. Every day. (Gayle, Principal, Revolution HS)

The implementation of an anti-hierarchical learning environment, one that allows for multidirectional teaching and learning, would reflect Renn's (2010) position that "Queer theory . . . questions normative constructions of socially constructed binaries such as male/female, teacher/learner, leader/follower" (p. 132).

Both Gayle and Bernie mentioned the value of the comments and redirection that are provided by students and faculty. They are open to learning new language and new norms, especially in areas of gender expression and sexuality. Marie notes that current students, as they enter high school, have more knowledge than prior generations about the possibilities of gender and sexuality. It is thus the adults' responsibility to learn from the students on these issues. With such flexibility, it becomes possible to deconstruct positional authority and move away from traditional top-down structures.

What particularly AJ has helped me with is the external, being careful to listen to what are the choices of words, the choices of reference, how to listen carefully when a young person gives a message about themselves and be able to pick that up so that I can -- because, often, there are hidden messages about who they are, how they want to be treated, to how they're feeling about how they're being treated. I think that's been a great opportunity to have that freshness from AJ to be able to begin to do that. (Gayle, Principal, Revolution HS)

I guess that it is good for teachers and administrators to know that its okay to ask the students for help and for questions when they don't know what to do. (Maggie, Student, Revolution HS)

I learn from the students. I mean I think that that's the best way for me to learn because it's a lot. And for me as the adult, I feel like I need to know everything, but it's impossible for me to know everything. It makes me a little bit insecure sometimes...and the only ones that can really teach me are the ones that are going through it because I'm not going through it. So that's important to me. (Levi, Teacher, Revolution HS)

Openness to learning from each other (administrators and teachers, teachers and students, and students and administrators) is essential for personal experiential learning to take place in a way that dismantles generational stereotypes, fears, and biases. As Mayo (2009) notes, relational gender and power identities often hold normative hierarchical structures in place. By queering and disrupting relationships and identities—recognizing students as teachers, and allowing leaders to be followers—existing power structures can be leveled.

Students, teachers, and leaders uniformly highlight personal relationships—while comparing and challenging different generational experiences—as access points for potentially uncomfortable, but new, understandings of queer experience in schools. This finding mirrors the arguments of critical race theorist Delgado (1989), who asserts that personal counter-narratives provide voice for marginalized communities, and can serve as the “pedagogical entry points” described by Taylor (2007, p. 183). Motivations to reflect and learn can be heightened by quality personal relationships among leaders, faculty, and students.

Bernie notes that his teachers are the ones who keep social justice and queer inclusion at the forefront of the school conversation. He comments that he is the oldest person on the school staff, and that the members of his team have gone through their credentialing programs more recently. Thus he knows that they are likely to have been exposed to more social justice content. Gayle admits that her students bring much of the conversation to her directly. She is open to listening to and reflecting on their experiences in order to incorporate that learning into her own praxis.

I just saw my young person who shared his transgender journey. When he came back and told us, I was just crying. How humble I was. Her journey – to see this young person who maybe presented to me in one way and was kind of sad, or quiet, or closed in, and then to see them come back, just in full flower. I just find it so beautiful! (Gayle, Revolution HS)

Although it may appear that Gayle misgenders her student in this statement, she is demonstrating her own journey through transitioning language and gender. Moving through change in the moment is often the practical reality of the school leader, and Gayle’s ability to adjust emanates from her care for this student.

Changing language. Language shapes how we think, and our conceptual structures impact the language we use. This applies to gender and sexual orientation, as exemplified by the evolution of the verb “to queer,” which leads to blurring dichotomous rigidities. Since language shapes power dynamics, intentionally queering language can serve a disruptive and transformative purpose.

Mayo (2009) contends that queer theory focuses on systems of subjectification and understanding of identities. Similarly, language usage and transformation are rich embodiments of systems of subjectification and identity. During leader, staff, and student interviews, the topics of pronoun usage and queering language were frequently raised. Across school generational levels, relationships to gendered language are changing dramatically, and students are at the forefront of these transformations. Leaders and faculty are thus experiencing direction and growth provided by their students.

My students will correct me. Last year I was talking about getting dressed up for a speech that they had to give. And they asked “What does that mean? What does getting dressed up mean?” And I said, “Maybe a dress for a female or a tie for a male.” And I saw a couple of faces and after class, a student came up to me and said, “I have to take offense with something you said.” And I knew exactly what they were talking about. I said, “the minute it came out of my mouth, I realized it, and I will address it.” And I did. (Necie, Alder HS)

I feel like I learned what non-binary gender is from my student giving a speech two years ago. That was her speech – “What is non-binary gender?” –And the kids are like, “What is this?” And I’m like, “I don’t know. Explain it to us.” (Lynn, Alder HS)

Marie notes that teachers are often “afraid of controlling their classes or hurting students’ feelings” if they do not know the words to use to address a gender-fluid or transitioning student. She understands that though such nervousness arises from honest concern, it can sometimes inhibit good intentions and care for students. Such resistance

may also emanate from the underlying rigidity of heteronormative schooling. Angela, a senior from Bay HS comments, “I’ve had an English teacher who says, ‘You’re not allowed to use “they” as a singular pronoun. That’s grammatically incorrect, so you shouldn’t be doing it’” (Student Focus Group, 2016). Angela’s frustration with teachers and parents is evident in her discussion of the matter of pronoun usage.

I think this is such a younger generation topic. Explaining pronouns and things like that to them, sometimes it goes straight over them. There are so many terms. I think the learning curve has become so big and so controversial because there are so many specific individual terms, acknowledgements, classifications. In some ways, it used to just be you were gay or straight! (Angela, Bay HS)

Bernie agrees that such challenges can make people uncomfortable due to a lack of familiarity with queer issues, but he insists that students and faculty must lead the way. Bernie, Marie, and Gayle all also recognize that classified staff members—such as school registrars and campus supervisors, who are generally on the periphery of conversations about student culture and climate—may have the most difficulty with adjusting to preferred gender and pronoun usage.

Students from Alder proudly describe their “Pronoun Awareness Week.” As part of the event, they make buttons and signs to demonstrate the fluidity of a seemingly simple language task like pronoun usage. Students from Bay HS report hearing about the event at Alder and want to do the same thing, but they are not sure how it will be supported at their large, comprehensive high school.

Access to social media. Increasing access to technology and social media has expanded student understandings of gender and sexuality. This access has also expanded gender and sexual displays—as well as policing—in the public arena. While social media can be illuminating and educational for youth who are curious and isolated, it can also be

condemning and vitriolic, leading to self-loathing, shame, and suicidal ideation for victims of public bullying.

In this study, leaders, teachers, and students all point to technology as a vehicle for learning about gender and sexuality. Marie notes that students are “doing so much online and learning so much about life” that they “experiment and process” in a way that was previously unavailable or forbidden (Marie, Bay HS). Louis, a student from Revolution HS, talks about how his younger brother watches a YouTube transgender makeup show because he likes to learn about putting on makeup. Louis has explained to his younger brother what “gender fluid” means, and encourages him, at 11 years of age, to point out gender fluid characters in his animated television shows and video games. Levi, a social studies teacher from Revolution, recognizes the empowering potential of student access to Snap Chat, Instagram or Tumblr, where they can see countless globalized gender expressions and representations. Teachers further comment that students comprehend abstract or mature topics more deeply when they are explained by members of their own peer group. These understandings are also often developed via technological sources.

AJ, a young teacher in her mid-20s who works actively to incorporate academic language and non-binary gender representation into her curriculum, embodies the generational differences of interacting with technology that exist even between her and her students.

I'm always blown away when I introduce a topic that I learned about while a sociology major studying gender. And the kids are like, "Well, duh. I saw that on Tumblr." Things like 'heteronormativity' or 'trans rights' or 'intersectionality'. And the kids are like, "Yeah. There's a meme about that on Tumblr." (AJ, Revolution HS)

Self-Reflection

A common thread surfacing in administrator interviews is a propensity for self-reflection about leadership work and its impact on students and schools. Self-reflection is an active and regular pursuit. The value of critical reflection is a central mechanism for understanding and then dismantling hegemonic structures. Brown (2004) expands this concept by proposing that

Critical inquiry involves the conscious consideration of the moral and ethical implications and consequences of schooling practices on students. Self-reflection adds the dimension of deep examination of personal assumptions, values, and beliefs. Critical reflection merges the two terms and involves the examination of personal and professional belief systems, as well as the deliberate consideration of the ethical implications and effect of practices (p. 89).

As Bernie offers,

I try to do a lot of soul-searching and introspection. It comes with doing this type of work, thinking about am I doing the best job I can and did I do the right thing? Mostly I go home and say “no” because there’s always more that I think I should be doing. It’s a slippery slope because you have to preserve yourself to be any good for anybody else - that self-care thing. (Bernie, Alder HS)

Theoharis (2007) stresses that intensive social justice work takes a toll on administrators, and he articulates the need for self-preservation and care. Bernie has a thirst for knowledge and reflection that has led him to community organizations and collaborative relationships, which provide him with support and resources. His collaboration with his partner Gayle, too, is an essential component of his professional life. The two of them often reflect upon their work together to generate critical feedback and encouragement.

According to Furman (2012), “Social justice leaders engage in critical self-reflection aimed at personal awareness and growth” (p. 197). This practice appears vital to support leaders in examining their inherent prejudices and values. As part of constructing a leadership identity, Furman (2012) states that leaders must “come clean” on their own biases to build a foundation for social justice praxis (p. 197). Brown (2004) recognizes that “the purposes of critical reflection are to externalize and investigate power relationships and to uncover hegemonic assumptions (p. 84). Bernie and Gayle regularly engage in this sort of deep reflection with each other, primarily because of their easy access to one other.

Such reflective work, however, is seldom part of district professional development or collaboration activities, due to competing demands of the position. Marshall and Hernandez (2012) detail the importance of self-reflection and analysis in challenging personal and institutional biases, beliefs, and homophobia, and Brown (2004) notes that “preparation programs need to carefully craft authentic experiences aimed at developing such skills (p. 78). Without institutionally supported professional time and structures for critical reflection, the practice is left only to those few practitioners who can find ways to do it on their own.

Interpersonal Engagement

The interpersonal work that leaders engage in involves skillfully using dialogue and relationships to guide transformation, interrupt bias, and model inclusive and socially just practices. The findings in this section address the value of authentic caring from the leadership perspective, how relationships in schools can interrupt bias, and the importance of professional development and community connections and networks.

The Value of Genuine Caring

Furman (2012) highlights being “relational and caring” as a core component of effective social justice leadership. With this quality, leaders can engage students and staff in genuine conversation based on authentically valued relationships. Furman (2012) identifies dialoguing as a bridging skill that leaders use to bring previously marginalized groups into the school institution. Theoharis (2007) adds that leaders dedicated to social justice recognize relationship-building as an indispensable tool.

I think to some extent you have to have a certain personality or mindset where you love and have compassion for people. We're in the process of getting ready to hire a new principal. I'm less concerned about what trainings they have or what credentials the have. I'm more concerned about if they are a compassionate, loving, social justice oriented person by nature. Because I think you can train those things. You can teach those skills, but they're not going to come naturally and will be much harder for somebody to learn if they're not part of who they are already. (AJ, Revolution HS)

The topic of authentic caring, however, is typically untouched by leadership preparation programs. To take such an intangible quality as caring and elevate it to the same level of importance as common core standards, budget-building, or education codes may seem be difficult for some administrators to accept. Yet relationships and caring consistently surface in the data and the literature as key dimensions of transformative leadership.

Relationship and Disruption of Bias

The leaders in this study acknowledge that the lived experiences of students and staff teach them more about queer inclusivity and validation than any leadership preparation program or professional development experience. These findings align with Delgado's (1989) critical race theory acknowledgement that narrative stories inform

personal learning and directly influence scholarship. After decades of institutionalized and forced invisibility, queer experience in schools comes to light primarily through the expression of students and staff who are less and less silenced by traditional, gender-prescriptive rigidities in the educational environment.

The leaders profiled here describe a transformational process that is generated by personal relationships, students' stories, community connections, and critical reflection (Mezirow, 1997; Taylor, 2007). Mezirow notes that adults cannot participate actively in a transformative learning process without critically identifying their own biases. The most common resource for identifying underlying limitations in this study was direct personal relationships and dialogue with others—particularly with students. Mezirow (1997) describes this as “transforming our frames of reference” (p. 7). Gayle comments:

These young people brought the experience to me. This wasn't in a book, it wasn't a class, these were living stories. These were young people that, by knowing them and knowing their stories, there was nothing I wouldn't do to protect them and to help them flower and live the best life possible. (Gayle, Revolution HS)

Delgado (1989) and Taylor (2007) describe how learning through counter-story telling and narrative gives voice to those previously marginalized. The power to change minds and scrutinize the hegemonic knowledge that creates the dominant mythology can thus be developed through intimate experiences with those who disrupt the norms of the educational structure. This is the case with the administrators in this study.

Bernie, Gayle, and Marie describe personal experiences that have confronted their beliefs and challenged how they think about social justice issues. None of them has outwardly resisted these confrontations, and the interactions have broadened and extended their understandings of the “other”—life experiences that they did not have and had not been taught about. Izzy, a gender non-conforming student from Revolution HS,

reflects, “I think if they meet someone that’s a nice queer person, it just kind of changes their views on things. It makes it personal. I feel like that helps people that are really closed minded.”

Several students from Alder and Revolution describe the importance of having groups like the Queer/Ally Guest Panel come and present to their classes. Queer/Ally Guest Panel is an organization working with the LGBTIQ Center that provides panels of queer youth, adults, and allies who reflect diverse life experiences, relationships and occupations. The speakers range from college students to school superintendents, ex-wives to business managers. Panelists tell their stories of coming out, discrimination they have experienced, where they have received support and affirmation, and how they have constructed their identities of gender and sexual orientation. Middle and high school students are encouraged to ask questions about the speakers’ lives and interests, and speakers are trained to maintain appropriate boundaries.

Many students see themselves and their emerging experiences reflected in the Queer/Ally Guest Panel. Yet the school administrators in this study only report involvement with Queer/Ally Guest Panel when they have arranged for them to visit their schools. If any of the school administrators, teachers, or school staff members went through a personal story-telling experience similar to the Queer/Ally Guest Panel in their own preparation programs, it was never reported.

Student relationships with school leadership. The hierarchical nature of relationships in schools among students, teachers, staff members, and administrators can place obstacles in the way of building authentic caring. Yet students from Revolution and Alder report that Gayle and Bernie have exceptional relationships with students. The

pervasive nature of their caring for students affects the whole school environment. “She loves us,” one student at Revolution reflects, referring to Gayle’s relationship with students. Bernie is seen in a similar light.

In my eyes, he’s exceeded my expectations of what an administrator could do or something like that. (This school) was already very accepting and welcoming, inclusive. I think that (Bernie) has a huge role in that coming about. I think he does a really good job at making everyone feel hey, they can have a positive experience here and does everything he can to create that positive experience. I know that he cares individually about each and every student. He comes up to someone specifically and asks him about something that’s going on in their life that’s really obscure. But you’re just kind of surprised that he even knows about it or remembered it and he always makes a point of asking me how my brother’s doing and things like that even though he hasn’t gone here for three years. So I just think he’s just done a great job at just encouraging this positive environment, everyone knows each other and we’re all here in this community together. (Henry, Alder HS)

At Revolution and Alder HS, it is a start-of-the-year tradition to have students write their stories. Teachers mentioned that Gayle initiated the practice when she became principal at Revolution. The stories the students write give faculty and administration the capacity to look at students through their own eyes, to get to know who needs more support and guidance, and to find out what has shifted in their lives from year to year. In a larger school, this type of relationship-building with students could be unwieldy. Lynn, a teacher at Alder, remarks that this practice of story-telling is valued among the staff because “we know everything about them and we’re invested” (Lynn, Alder HS).

Bernie describes how he frequently walks around campus and sits down next to students to engage them in conversation to show interest in them as people. He reflects that his students seem “touched by the fact that somebody’s taking the time to want to learn more about them” (Bernie, Alder HS).

Staff relationships with school leadership. Relationships between staff and administrators can range from effective and cooperative, to situationally tenuous, to outright hostile, all based on leadership style, dynamics, and demands of the school. When talking about current and past administrators, teachers are genuinely emotional and expressive. They either support their current leaders or express feelings of disrespect, anger, and frustration toward previous ones. Uniformly, however, teachers acknowledge that the leader sets the tone that informs the quality of relationships across staff structures. Having had previous uncommunicative and unsatisfying relationships with school leaders, one teacher from Revolution is relieved to find that Gayle is committed to healthy relationships.

She's one of the main reasons (I came here.) When I met her, I was like, "I want to work for her." I was just like "You're exactly what's rebuilding my faith in the profession I have chosen." And because she's so about the students and just so giving. She cares about each student. She cares about each individual. She wants them to be successful in their own way. And is also very flexible in how she deals with each student, separately, differently. (AJ, Revolution HS)

Leaders' relationships with parents. School administrators can provide a safe space, not only for students and staff, but also for parents who need understanding and connection about their children.

There have been a couple of times where it's been difficult for a parent to see the beauty in their child when they haven't had a different picture of who their child is. And that's been more walking alongside, handholding, having compassion for the parent and compassion for the young person and holding them both with love. (Gayle, Revolution HS)

School leaders are often in the position of counseling and negotiating with parents over students' identities. Marie at Bay HS oversees the counseling department at the school, and she interacts often with parents seeking support and clarification.

I have had parents who were frustrated with their child have conversations with me like -- "What's going on now?" or "This has been going on..." more a kind of parent exhaustion. And for the students who haven't come out to their parents but have come out here, we have had the parents say things like, "Well, I think he might be gay" or "I don't think he's gay." There's a lot of questioning but they are almost asking us to tell them. You know? (Marie, Bay HS)

Administrators can be in precarious positions with parents, but they can ultimately serve as advocates for queer and questioning students. Clear communication, empathy, and modeling are needed for all parties in potentially tenuous conversations between parents and the school. School personnel are under no legal obligation to disclose confidential student information to parents regarding gender and sexuality issues.

Professional Development and Community Connections

Cooper (2010) notes that students require leaders who can build community partnerships to develop important understandings about cultural change, culturally responsive teaching and learning, and school climate and safety. All three leaders in the study are committed to involvement with community organizations and professional networks. They rely on these organizations for a variety of resources and experiences that they see as essential to their leadership development. Fortunately, the communities in which the case studies are located provide a variety of resources on gender and sexuality, health and medical options, and social groups and advocacy. Instead of relying on their preparation programs for professional development on gender and sexuality, leaders and teachers primarily access community resources for school-wide professional development needs and for personal growth and information.

These findings offer a response to the findings in Jennings' (2012) study, which links the lack of queer content in educational leadership programs to staff and student discomfort with the topic, insufficient experience and knowledge, or outright resistance.

The programmatic invisibility of queer issues has compelled social justice leaders such as Bernie, Gayle, and Marie to extend their learning beyond their preparation programs. They have sought external experiences and connections, in line with what critical race theorists describe as essential counter-storytelling, in a way disrupts dominant narratives (Ladson-Billings, 1999).

Bernie and Gayle in particular—and Marie to a lesser extent—actively seek out community resources to build their knowledge and experience of issues concerning youth and education. They also support their teachers to take advantage of these resources by providing professional development at the school site or by allocating funding for staff to attend professional development in the community. The leaders realize that they cannot provide all of the professional development and support necessary for their schools. The essence of distributed leadership involves building capacity at the school site through shared funds of knowledge and cooperative learning.

Gayle recalls organizing professional development professional development for her staff “because we will have six transgender youth in one room, from one point to another point, that actually we are aware of. We have others that are wonderfully gender-fluid, and exploring” (Gayle, *Revolution*). Effective school leaders ascertain the needs of their students and bridge the knowledge and experience divide with their teaching staff, as Gayle does. Gayle’s lack of fear or backlash on the issue of gender expression and identity is significant, as is her insistence on bringing resources to her school that are needed by students. She does not necessarily ask first for permission for these initiatives or seek guidance from her district office or others in authority. Gayle’s decisions are student-centered.

In many instances, professional development opportunities such as those described above are voluntary or optional. AJ comments, “The only way I’ve really gotten my own professional development is by doing it myself.” Several other teachers are overwhelmed and dismayed at the amount of knowledge and understanding required of school employees. They also criticize how multiple topics offered in professional development sessions are often covered narrowly, with little time for meaningful depth.

Because of contract limitations in work hours and conditions for teachers—which are exacerbated by decreased funding for professional development—staff members are provided few chances for extensive professional development on issues not considered essential to curriculum, instruction, or accountability. Topics such as high-stakes testing, changing assessment measures, and other school-wide mandates present a challenge for leaders who wish to facilitate other meaningful learning opportunities in their schools. Yet staff members at Revolution, Bay, and Alder express appreciation for the professional development and support they have received.

I’m on the School Climate Coalition. So we are working to try to get training to all teachers, all admin, everyone who works at a school. And it’s just not happening because there’s no money. There’s no resources. People don’t have the time to go. Not everyone’s interested in going. So there’s not a lot out there. The School Climate Coalition does this little one, two-hour trainings for professional development at schools. So those kind of talk about simple things like have a safe schools triangle in your classroom and don’t out your students to their parents, like basic stuff. Because there’s such limited amount of time for professional development that’s built into the school year. That’s usually a pretty lower priority. And the fact that we’ve consistently had something like that every year at Revolution has been really great. And I don’t think that happens at other schools. (AJ, Revolution HS)

He (Bernie) goes out of his way to make sure that we all have as much training as possible. He sent me to Time to Thrive. He sent several of us to some anti-bullying workshops, social justice. Social justice is huge for him. He makes sure that we have a lot of exposure to Teaching Tolerance materials... (Adrian, Alder HS)

At the beginning of the current school year, Marie and one of her teachers who serves as a representative for the School Climate Coalition facilitated a professional development session addressing the influx of transgender students on the Bay High School campus. While this professional development addressed a need at the school, Larry, the campus supervisor, was disappointed that the professional development did not include all campus personnel. Effective distributed leadership practices recognize the value of sharing essential knowledge with all personnel in the school environment, yet often the response at the school site is to deliver a short topic-focused professional development only to teachers. Contradictory expectations and requirements for different levels or categories of site personnel can cause school culture to remain uneven.

It didn't make it down to our level . . . custodians, all of our classified staff should have been included in that training we had, right? I mean, everyone is interacting with kids everyday. Maybe not in the same capacity as a teacher, but...they're still our children and they're still vulnerable emotionally. You just need to train everyone in those types of environments. (Larry, Bay HS)

In the school communities profiled, organizations such as the School Climate Coalition, Youth Alliance Committee, PFLAG, LGBTIQ Center, Gender Spectrum, and county office-sponsored professional development on the FAIR Act have filled the knowledge and professional development gaps that schools cannot address internally, or that preparation programs have neglected. For the majority of teachers, however, attendance and participation in such professional development is optional. This allows teachers who do not elect to confront their own biases and fears to opt out. As a result, inclusion-focused professional development sessions tend to have audiences comprised largely of staff members who already support the social justice theme and purpose of the professional development.

Teachers and administrators learn about new legislation regarding gender and sexuality issues primarily from outside agencies, instead of from the district office or county office of education. Bernie comments that he has invited representatives from the LGBTIQ Center to inform his school district Board of Trustees about the text of AB 1266 so that school officials may be informed, and Board policies reviewed and updated. Formal school district administrative structures seldom take the lead in informing personnel of new laws and educational practices regarding issues of queer inclusion. Committed school leaders, then, are required to seek their own information and learning opportunities.

Challenging Policies and Structures

Policies, practices, and structural components of the school environment are all the responsibility of the leader. Accountability for reliable structures and practices is key for a functional and inclusive school because schools are large, interwoven systems. Furman (2012) describes action-oriented and transformative leaders as those who are “proactive change agents” (p. 195). The capacity to create transformative change that is ongoing and systemic requires determination and perseverance. Shields (2010) notes that transformative educational leadership centers education in a broader social context, supports innovation, and builds and sustains culture. By these standards, the three leaders in this study are both action-oriented and transformative.

The findings in this section are organized into three broad areas: Interruption, Intervention and Inclusion; Policies and Practices; and School Culture and Safety. The first area discusses how school leaders use positional authority, disruptive authority, and modeling to influence the school environment and set professional and cultural

expectations for inclusive praxis. The second area describes the implications of specific structures and policies—including student information systems and gender-neutral bathrooms. The third area discusses how distributed leadership, smaller schools, and QSA clubs can become contexts for promoting queer inclusion.

The infrastructure of a school contains such elements as a student information database system, support staffing, policies and practices, facilities, and co-curricular activities and athletics—all bound by role and responsibility hierarchies. The student information database (usually called an SIS—Student Information System), for instance, is currently a challenge for many school districts that are attempting to provide more expansive options for student gender selection. In several instances, study participants found ways to accommodate their students respectfully by subverting the rigidity of their SIS. Several principals have had to intervene with classified staff, who do not routinely have access to the same conversations and professional development provided to teaching staff. Particularly prevalent in the case study schools at this point are facilities issues arising from the implementation of AB 1266, which gives students the right to use facilities (bathrooms and locker rooms) aligned with their preferred gender, as well as participate in athletics programs in the same manner.

Interruption, Intervention, and Inclusion

School leaders can use positional authority, disruptive authority, and modeling to influence the school environment and set professional and cultural expectations for inclusion of all students and staff on their campuses. This positional authority can be used to guide, interrupt, or demonstrate for both students and staff. The leaders in this study use positional authority judiciously, and with a social justice purpose. Payne and Smith

(2013) examine the inaction of school principals, who in their study have chose to be “neutral,” instead of using their positional authority to disrupt bias—primarily out of fear and conflict avoidance. The school leaders in this study, in contrast, consciously reject neutrality, understanding that such a stance can silence student and staff voices and identities.

The committed and persistent quality of the social justice leader, according to Furman (2012), centers on being an unyielding activist, especially in the face of barriers and resistance to change. This involves courage, diplomacy, fortitude, and substantial relationship and communication skill, as evidenced by the leaders in this study. Findings suggest that the principals question heteronormative or discriminatory practices in each of the four categories discussed in this chapter: personal, interpersonal, structural and instructional.

So Cookie’s given name was Jose, and at that time, the prior Registrar was determined that he would not be called Cookie. He was still going by “he” but wanted Cookie and would wear this beautiful pink hair! But anyway, I was very direct in that. I said this young person has chosen this, would like to be identified like this, and we’re going to give this young person the same respect. And you’ll be calling Cookie “Cookie.” (Gayle, Revolution HS)

Modeling inclusive behavior is a prominent theme throughout the leaders’ interviews, and it is reflected in teacher and student accounts of each leader. Although the capacity to model behavior is an intangible skill, staff and students clearly notice leader behaviors, attitudes, and interactions. Positional responsibility of leaders is a key factor in creating safe and inclusive school environments, and for transformative leaders it extends beyond bullying and discrimination rhetoric—which most school leaders feel responsible for monitoring regardless of their own personal beliefs or abilities. Modeling transformative social justice authority goes further. It is based upon an understanding of

the benefits of modeling leadership, a belief in one's own moral compass, and a commitment to "walking the walk." When asked about her role in building her school's climate of acceptance and relationship, Gayle responds that it is about

authentically modeling all the time. And for me, it's intentional. I have to be external and vocal about my beliefs and how I work with the young people. I also think adults become complacent. And they shouldn't be allowed. They should be made aware that they cannot use that as the reason they shouldn't be always listening, always modeling, always guiding, or always just saying "not acceptable." (Gayle, Revolution HS)

Gayle acknowledges that authentic adult modeling comes from being "compassionate, gentle and respectful" with others who face their own barriers and biases. She emphasizes the need to suspend her own biases about staff members and students in order to help others work through theirs. Most often, interruption and intervention happen through relational influence and purposeful communication. In some circumstances, however, Gayle, Bernie, and Marie appear to enjoy wielding their positional authority when higher levels of disruption are required, especially with parents. When Alder installed gender-neutral bathrooms, for instance, Bernie was confronted by an upset parent.

I've had many conversations with her. She's called the School Board. She called the district office and spoke to the superintendent, who refers her right back to me, and I will take those calls anytime. She wanted – and still does- want there to be something in the law that she can point to in writing and bring back and wave in my face that says her daughter has the right to have access to a bathroom where there are no transgender students...I relish those conversations because there's a part of me that likes doing the throw-down thing. That kind of stuff, when it comes to student advocacy, I can give as good as I get. Some of these meetings just get lots of Kleenex and raised voices. That's another place where sometimes my role is, "Here's how we're going to have this meeting or we're not going to have it." (Bernie, Alder HS)

Students at Alder recognize that Bernie is visibly supportive and relational, but that he also maintains boundaries for communication and behavior. Even though such

efforts might be considered “invisible work,” Bernie carefully sets a tone for his school climate that builds student perceptions of a safe educational environment. These actions make an impact on Bernie’s students.

I always thought it was impressive how he’s very friendly and welcoming and easy to talk to but simultaneously, he doesn’t take any crap. He’ll put his foot down when he needs to and when he should. (Celine, Alder HS)

I think he’s modeling how to be supportive, how to support someone who uses different pronouns and to be okay with people who identify differently. (Henry, Alder HS)

I feel like he’s visibly supportive. He will come and pop into our QSA and sit there and listen to what kids have to say. He was at Coming Out Day and came out as an ally. (Mattie, Alder HS)

Teachers at Alder reflect that Bernie’s actions, and their own positive modeling, enable students to form the positive relationships with adults that will be vital to their success as healthy adults.

Marie readily affiliates herself with the risks and rewards of action-oriented and transformative thinking. According to her, it is important to remain purposeful and communicative in social justice action, while not being limited by fear or the discomfort of others. Accordingly, Marie has made significant structural changes at Bay HS.

I think that to be a leader who’s going to advocate, you have to really not be thinking about what other people think. I think you have to be thinking about the students. And I think you do need to worry a little bit about what other people are going to think, which is why you do such a thing as send a letter to parents. We have transgender bathrooms. But you’re still going to have the bathrooms. You’re going to do things to not surprise people, but you’re still going to do those things. You’re going to do it slowly and you’re going to do it bit by bit and you’re going to let it happen. You’re going to figure out ways to not alarm people but you still just do the right thing. So I think it’s probably, just on the fundamental level, knowing what the law is. (Marie, Bay HS)

Transformative school leaders can use existing legal mandates for inclusionary practices in schools (such as AB1266) to promote change. Teachers at Revolution point

specifically to the need for their leader to know the legal rights of all students in order to provide responsible advocacy. Bernie mentions the importance of knowing the education code and state laws in order to provide safeguards for his campus and students. Because of his sense of social justice and willingness to serve as an advocate, Bernie has worked to educate his district Board of Trustees, Superintendent, and parents on the changing laws regarding inclusion.

Policies and Practices

Student information systems. School information systems such as AERIES, Infinite Campus, PowerSchool and Illuminate act to limit gender options to prescribed binaries. Students who identify as gender non-conforming are frequently outed and misgendered on class rosters, or by substitute teachers who are unaware of system discrepancies. Additionally, leaders and teachers in this study report that classified personnel (such as secretaries, attendance clerks and registrars) in particular have difficulty thinking outside of the gender binary when it comes to accommodating students by using their preferred gender.

For one young person, transgender, I haven't been able to get Google email to change to his chosen name. It's still showing up as his original. And my Registrar, who has made such progress, is still working with the Infinite Campus issues because she's still evolving. It's because when you're taught something, you think "it's gotta be this way" and "it's the law", and it's really hard to say "no, the law is different now." But then the technology system, the software, hasn't caught up with that. (Gayle, Revolution HS)

Marie's school district office has developed a policy regarding name and gender changes within a limited SIS. Several other school districts contacted as part of this study remain firm by requiring a court-ordered name and gender change or re-issued birth certificate before allowing a change in the SIS. Marie's advocacy and commitment to

respecting her students, however, has enabled her to override her district's official policy. Because Marie's school has experienced an influx of transgender students coming from other school districts because it is perceived as the "safe school," she and her counseling staff make student-centered decisions to override the system.

So even before we had a policy, we just used logic. Unfortunately, you have to put in a binary gender and there's no option. So we ask the student, "What would your preference be? And even if it's not on their birth certificate, we put in what the student wanted, because you know what, it's just the computer. You can change it back. (Marie, Bay HS)

Marie understands that there is a risk by taking this action, but she is willing to take it. CALPADS, the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System, shares information with every school district's SIS to align and compare student data. All student identifiers must match, or districts receive error reports that they are mandated to correct. The increase in transgender and gender-nonconforming students has interrupted the rigid system of CALPADS to the extent that the California Department of Education (CDE) is faced with the need to review its data collection options. Progressive social change at the level of the CDE is slow and plodding, however, at best. In the meantime, social justice leaders are compensating for system limitations to their students' benefit.

Staff who work with Marie note that she frequently subverts district policies, and Marie responds, "We really know what's going on. I think that 'above' is pretty removed from what's happening. So I don't see them as a hindrance because mostly, I'm just not going to get them involved." This reaction from Marie speaks to the feeling of immediacy that comes from working with youth in need, in response to delays in system changes frequently seen in organizations such as school districts and the CDE. Irma, a

counselor who works with Marie at Bay, confirms that she makes unauthorized identity and name changes in the SIS for all students who request it.

Teachers at Alder express frustration with the limitations of the SIS, and they have found other ways to accommodate their students.

I wish they'd take the gender part off the roll sheet because I don't really think it's relevant. When I did roll for the first time this year, instead of going around the room, I said "I haven't even looked at my roll sheet. I don't know anything about any of you. I'd like you to just go around the room and introduce yourselves however you want to be in my classroom." (Lynn, Alder HS)

Another teacher at Alder gives students a class survey to determine preferred names and genders. This is done with the full support of school leadership, regardless of existing mandates for accurate SIS reporting and documentation. Over the past few years, all three schools and leaders profiled in this study have worked with increasing numbers of transgender students enrolling in these schools, in order to examine and shift their practices and policies as needed.

At a recent AERIES user conference, I had the opportunity to meet with a senior programmer to discuss the issue of gender binary limitations. We have been in contact over the past few months, and he reports that AERIES has taken on the challenge of adding additional gender options to expand the binary, and to allow for additional preferred names. These options are promised for a March release. When I originally approached the AERIES programming team, my initial contact was aggressively opposed to my query, stating, "We can't do that. *Those* people just need to be who they are."

It is notable that something so basic as a student information database can alter student experience of inclusion and safety in school. While social justice leaders may seek to challenge "big picture" policies and practices, the daily workings and underlying

structures of school systems can also be inhibiting and discriminatory. This can apply to facilities, including locker rooms and bathrooms.

Gender-inclusive bathrooms. A recent state law, AB1266, gives students the right to use facilities consistent with their preferred gender. While many schools are grappling with how to accommodate the law, the case study schools report that the new facilities challenge is less controversial than was initially assumed. Marie notes that she sent a letter out to parents at the beginning of the year to inform them about the new bathrooms, and expected to confront some parental objections. To her surprise, there was no evident response from the parent community. To prepare for community backlash, leaders of all three schools had reviewed the laws, discussed the changes with staff and students, and consulted with expert resources.

One of the things that the gender therapist said that I thought was really interesting was that the more -- especially for students who are indecisive or who are afraid to speak up -- the more times you can take the choice away from them, the more times you can take that moment when they're standing between the boys' and girls' restroom away so that they're not having that inner conflict, the better. (Lynn, Alder HS)

At Revolution, Gayle worked with a student leader, Maggie, to help her navigate the obstacles of establishing a gender-neutral bathroom recognized at their school. With Gayle's support, Maggie addressed the Board of Trustees and a facilities firm to negotiate the change. Gayle comments, "I coached her, but the student did all the talking which made it so much more powerful." Gayle's navigational support of the process was essential for a successful outcome.

School Culture and Safety

One of the most demanding aspects of the school leader's job is to provide a safe and supportive school campus for all students. Theoharis (2007) asserts that there is a

direct correlation between organizational structure, leadership, inclusivity, and perceptions of safety and belonging on school campuses that can be translated to academic achievement. Schools are frequently evaluated not only by their teaching and learning data, but by their school climate and culture. National and regional surveys, such as the annual GLSEN School Climate Survey and the WestEd California Healthy Kids Survey, assess students' feelings of school safety and connectedness, and they focus on bullying and harassment issues, as well as student at-risk behaviors. Despite most leaders having little practice or professional development for such tasks, the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (CPSELs) articulate the following goal for all school leaders:

Standard 2: Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

2.1 Develop a School Culture and Ensure Equity.

Furman (2012) raises the challenge that social justice leaders work proactively to construct inclusive practices and systems within their schools. She further asserts that it is the responsibility of school leaders to create opportunities for empowerment and dialogue, and develop strategies to collaborate with members of the school community.

The school leaders in this study have developed strategies for addressing safety and school culture, and many of their understandings originate from their own feelings of personal reflection and interpersonal sensitivity and awareness. Bernie demonstrates his compassion and understanding for the youth he works with, and recognizes

the capacity for a student to come just to be in the world or certainly to come here during school, I'm reminded of how important it is for kids who have money issues at home or are struggling with any part of their identity or acceptance among peers and staff or family...how important is it for us to provide an atmosphere here at school where they're just another student and its an equal

playing field. I look at these kids and realize how much of a struggle it is and still, even though this is a come-as-you-are, be-who-you-are kind of school, it's tough being a teenager. It's a tough gig. (Bernie, Alder, HS)

Bernie acknowledges that some students come to Alder because they do not feel happy or safe at their home schools. In conversation with some of his students, Bernie came to understand more about his impact on the school culture.

I was subbing for a class one day. They were wondering why I came to this school. This one girl says, "Well, do you know that you're responsible for starting the queerest school? I was taken aback for a minute because I've heard our school referred to as all kinds of different things. That was a first for me. I'll take that as a badge of honor. She was really proud of saying that because she was one of the students who came from (another high school) and didn't have a big comfort zone there. (Bernie, Alder HS)

Revolution and Bay also receive students who have not felt safe or welcome elsewhere. Marie shares her experience with accepting transfer students from other schools, whom she knows want to attend Bay because the school is "like a beacon. Kids feel safe to come here and be themselves." Necie, a teacher at Alder, recognizes the value of the queer inclusive culture at her school:

Once one or two students say "Oh, I can be safe there" then students with a variety of things that we don't even realize they have, feel safe here too. Because when you have one group that notices that they're safe and the GSA has shown to do this again and again, other students of marginalized populations will feel safer because it's just something about the culture of the school. (Necie, Alder HS)

By actively working to disrupt homophobic patterns on campus, the climates of Bay, Alder, and Revolution high schools have improved for the entire student population. The support and validation of the school leadership for these culture changes has been essential.

Students' perceptions of the inclusive nature of their school campuses differs among the three schools, most likely in relation to the size of the campuses. For students at Bay HS, while there is superficial acceptance and tolerance of difference by the study body and teachers, there is not a sense of overt inclusivity regarding sexual orientation and gender expression that is evident at the two smaller schools.

I think the climate here is definitely pretty neutral, like it's accepting. There's not a whole lot of conflict around it. But it's not particularly outgoing in terms of education and outreach and stuff. It's not like there's a lot of effort to help, but there are also not a lot of negative consequences. (Mia, Bay HS)

Bay students contradict each other's responses about homophobic and bullying behaviors on campus, but they conclude that it depends on their social groups and perceived social standing. They do agree, however, that they need a safer environment, and believe that school initiatives on inclusion generally happen as the result of incidents and conflict, rather than due to proactive and visionary planned change. Bay students feel that their campus is more inclusive regarding sexual orientation than gender expression.

Well for me, I feel like it's more about gender stuff. I mean I feel like sexuality is a lot easier to wrap people's heads around. When gender comes into play, they are like, "What? That's not real. That can't be true." We have a long way to go with the gender stuff but it's gotten a little better. (Angela, Bay HS)

Alder students are consistently positive about the inclusive environment of their school. Since many students come from different schools to transfer into Alder, their comparative experience in other settings is foundational. Regardless of their own sexual orientation or gender identity, the experiences at Alder are seen as affirming.

It's a very positive welcoming environment. I think people make a lot of noticeable effort to make people feel included regardless of what they might have or think that makes them different. So I think queer students here especially compared to other high schools, are going to have a far easier time just feeling

like they fit in here like they're part of the community and not being bullied or made fun of or put down for their differences. (Henry, Alder HS)

Alder was actually my safe space where I would try out new things with my identity before I would at home or elsewhere. The teachers would refer to me the way I wanted to be referred to. It was very easy to integrate my identity change into how I was at school. If I wanted to wear a dress, I wore it at school. (Celine, Alder HS)

It makes me happy when people feel like they're able to be who they are and be so open about it when sometimes they can't be that open at home or with friends at different schools. The teachers are very supportive. They'll talk about their experiences and they'll be willing to help students try to figure out who they are. (Mattie, Alder HS)

Students from Revolution echo many of the sentiments expressed by Alder students, especially when comparing previous school campuses and reasons for transferring. Louis comments about his transfer to Revolution from a large comprehensive high school: "A friend recommended Revolution to me and it was totally different, such a hugely different environment. I can be as gay as I want, being whatever." Izzy echoes that, "As soon as I got here, it was just like all this queerness is like BAM in your face."

Distributed leadership. School leaders cannot do the essential social justice work alone. The necessity to build capacity and leadership in school personnel and systems is too intensive an undertaking to leave to one single person. Silva (2000) discusses the importance of interfacing teacher leadership and principal leadership, and notes that without efficient distributed leadership, reform efforts may be weakened and dismantled by staff turnover or leadership change. Distributed leadership creates a web of support and communication in schools, as well as shared expectations for culture-building and inclusionary practices. It can also shift prior paradigms about the

hierarchical nature of school leadership, and the location of the center of power in the school environment.

A common theme at all three school sites in this study is the high level of respect and confidence exhibited between the school staff and the school leadership. Bernie's teachers, for example, comment that he is "Super supportive. Because he'll initiate and then kind of trust us to figure it out how we're going to do these things" (Lynn, Alder HS). Effective distributive leadership practice, as defined by Brooks et al. (2007), is exemplified at the case study schools in the ways that the leaders task their teachers with gathering and distributing new information related to inclusive laws and practices, trusting that they will disseminate this information to other staff members. This is also seen in site decision-making, and in general feelings of shared purpose, especially regarding social justice initiatives.

I think a lot of times just for budgetary reasons I go to those kinds of trainings and I report out to the group. Typically I'll report at staff meetings or I'll talk to teachers one-on-one about things that might need to know. But most of the reporting out that I do is probably to Layla and Bernie specifically about what I learned, how does this affect us, is it something we can do? (Necie, Alder HS)

Bernie feels fortunate that his team has been in place for many years together, with many there for more than ten years. According to him, having very little turnover in staff "makes students grasp pretty early on that staff is comfortable here and that they don't want to leave." According to a Gallup poll article, (Robison, 2008), the primary reason for job turnover is relationship with a manager or boss. This speaks to the culture and climate of the school environment Bernie has helped to create with his staff.

Smaller, closer. A recurring theme in study findings is the personalized and more manageable nature of a smaller school. Bernie notes,

I will work best at a place where I can get to know a smaller number of students and celebrate who they are as individuals which is really something that we've tried and still try to do here. You can do that a lot better with 150 than 2,000. (Bernie, Alder HS)

While school principals do not directly influence or control the number of students at their school sites, access to students and the undeniable impact of interpersonal relationships and importance of distributed leadership cannot be understated.

When I think about being a site leader at a larger middle school or high school, and all of the different personalities and all of the different teachers, and then the limitations that we have as to how we can interact with our staff and students...you're not having that intimate of a conversation around practices and belief systems and inclusion. In the bigger schools, there weren't enough adults. (Students) didn't feel recognized; they felt invisible to the adults. (Gayle, Revolution HS)

I think the fact that we're small is a really big part of it because in those instances where there is any sort of bullying or discrimination, we see it. We're quick on it. So we don't allow that kind of conversation of that kind of attitude to become the subversive thing that's lurking all the time. We see it very clearly for what it is and we shut it down. And I think that has created a sense of safety for our students. And kids can kind of walk in and exhale because they know we're on the lookout for it. They know it's not something that's going to fly here. Whereas, I think in a bigger school environment where there's just more bodies and it's harder to manage, it just becomes this more subversive thing that's lurking and kids are afraid. (Necie, Alder HS)

Teacher accounts from Alder and Revolution describe the capacity of a smaller school environment to intervene and disrupt discriminatory practices and build responsive systems of communication and peer support. Collaboration among the leader, staff, and students thus appears to take place more readily in smaller settings with fewer students and staff—benefiting students significantly.

Queer Straight Alliance clubs develop community cultural wealth. Yosso's (2005) theory of "community cultural wealth" (p. 70) outlines how students of color can potentially disrupt the dominant normative by infusing their cultural capital into the school environment. Interrogating deficit thinking about race (and gender) and reframing assets into a theoretical framework illuminates cultural wealth as "the sense of group consciousness and collective identity that serves as a resource aimed at the advancement of an entire group" (p. 81). Yosso proposes the following strands of community cultural wealth: aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistant capital (p. 79). Pennell (2015) expands this by adding a seventh strand reflecting queer students and communities: "transgressive capital" (p. 1). Pennell defines transgressive capital as "the ways in which communities (queer or minoritized groups) proactively challenge and move beyond boundaries that limit and bind them, creating their own reality" (p. 6).

Most schools are heteronormatively narrow and restrictive, and the lived experiences and visibility of queer youth and school staff can be redefined when they assert their own community cultural wealth and transgressive capital through such venues as Queer Straight Alliance (QSA) clubs on campus. The existence of a QSA on campus disrupts and makes visible those who may otherwise be invisible or marginalized. It can provide a sense of group consciousness and collective identity for queer youth, staff, and their allies. Allowing or limiting that visibility and voice has traditionally fallen to the school leader.

Supporting a QSA on a school campus can be a direct challenge for school leaders. All three school leaders in this study are demonstrably committed to and

involved in their schools' QSA clubs. The students and teachers at Revolution report that the principal before Gayle did not allow the formation of a QSA based on his own fear of controversy and faith-based belief system. One student describes him as "fearful and judgmental" (Izzy, Revolution HS), while Gayle remembers that, "They felt they had to be very careful with what they said and how they said it. AJ did not feel supported or safe." AJ describes Gayle as being immediately supportive of the QSA, even before she started the new school year. Similarly, Bernie re-energized support for the QSA at Alder:

We had a student between 8th and 9th grade whose parents came to us and said, "This student is talking about being transgendered and we don't know what to do with it." And Bernie called me into his office and he pretty much said, "You're starting this again and you're figuring out how we're going to deal with this." It was Bernie saying "This is what this student needs and so we're going to provide it." (Lynn, Alder HS)

The other thing I would say about Bernie is that I feel like he's very visibly supportive. He will come and pop into our QSA and sit there and listen to what kids have to say. He came to Coming Out Day and came out as an ally. Those might seem like subtle or small things, but I think kids see that and they're like, "Oh, my principal is here at this and participating in these conversations." (Layla, Alder HS)

Both Lynn at Alder and AJ at Revolution serve as staff advisors for their QSA clubs, and students comment that their teachers share their sexual orientation openly with them. Modeling honest representation of identity could potentially come at the cost of job security and comfort in some settings, and without school leaders' support, this open disclosure might not be possible. California, on the other hand, has explicit protections for employees relative to gender and sexual identities in the workplace, so teachers are protected. The historically discriminatory practices and policies in education referred to by Lugg (2003) are thus intentionally overturned at all three of the case study schools.

Having openly queer teachers supported by school leaders is a substantive change, diversifying images of authority for students.

This sort of openness is the exception rather than the rule in schools in the United States—though practices are changing gradually. School leaders in this study do not police their teachers for heteronormative behaviors, nor do they maintain hegemonic structures of gender and sexuality that were formally in effect in the educational workplace until 1993—and unofficially for far longer (Ford, 2013). Marie, Gayle, Marie, and Bernie all respectfully support their teachers’ acknowledgement of their identities in their schools.

Marie, as a young teacher, was prohibited by her principal from organizing several anti-discrimination activities and events at her high school. Having the second day of a queer inclusive theater performance shut down, Marie’s principal delivered the message, “Well, it’s not your place to do *that* kind of education.” She affirms that being the GSA advisor as a teacher has foundationally informed her social justice work as a school leader.

QSAs have the capacity to provide a safe space for queer students and allies, perform activist and awareness work, and engage in transgressive educational acts in schools. At Alder, the QSA sponsored a “Pronoun Awareness Week” and created pronoun buttons for staff and students to wear. Bernie wore his, as did most teachers. Supporting these sorts of opportunities challenges traditional structures of power and knowledge in the school environment (Capper, Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006.) By incorporating queer transgressive capital into school events and activities, Bernie, Gayle, and Marie broaden the range of lived experience in their schools.

Students at Revolution know that Gayle also supports their efforts socially, emotionally, and financially.

Especially the fundraisers. When we would try to fundraise for QSA she would donate...that showed her huge support and how much she believed in our group. Whenever she hears anyone being homophobic, she would get really pissed. She is just the best. (Alisa, Revolution HS)

Yet despite the supportive work on-going at Alder, Bay, and Revolution, schools nearby continue to experience restriction and gatekeeping by school leadership as far as queer inclusion is concerned. Bernie and several teachers were contacted last year by teachers at a local middle school about having the Alder QSA visit. The middle school teachers believed they needed a GSA/QSA to support their queer students and their student population to develop awareness and acceptance of gender and sexuality differences. The proposed visit, however, was cancelled by the middle school's principal. Bernie tried to intervene by advocating with the middle school principal, but the visit did not take place.²

With the support of their schools' QSA clubs, and by participating in such activities as Pronoun Awareness Week, the Gay Pride Parade, and Coming Out Day, Bernie, Marie, and Gayle validate queer community cultural wealth and offer their leadership to make visible those who have been historically invisible.

² In the past four months since gathering this data, the middle school has changed its policy and now supports the formation of the GSA.

Instructional Engagement

Teaching and Learning

The foundational purpose of any school system is to deliver academic knowledge and skills through formal and informal curriculum, via a variety of instructional methods. Instructional practices reflect values and beliefs concerning integration and inclusion. They require gender and sexual orientation literacy among educators in the environment, as well as advocacy, professional development, and accountability from school leaders.

Teaching and learning construct the experiences for generations of students in the United States to gain knowledge and create the lens through which they see their worlds. Furman (2012) refers to this as the “centrality of learning” (p. 197), stating that social justice educators committed to a socially just pedagogy must “continuously examine whether . . . student learning is equitable for all student groups . . . and encourage teachers to critically examine their practice for possible bias in regard to race, class and gender” (p. 279).

In addition to teaching and learning, school systems are composed of student information databases, budgets, laws, policies, practices, governing structures, and hierarchies. All of these systems generally act to hold dominant constructs in place. Examples of this include a student information database with only gender binary choices; restrooms and locker rooms; sex-segregated athletics and gendered activities; and school policies like dress codes. The findings of this study describe how school leaders share, change, disrupt, and supported innovative practices in their schools to build more inclusive experience through advocacy, compassion, and positional authority.

Instructional leadership. California state curriculum standards are often described by educators as “a mile wide and an inch deep.” The quantity of discrete topics that teachers are mandated to teach can limit creativity and add time pressure to cover content standards before high stakes assessments. School leaders have the capacity to lead the way and support teachers in creating and broadening curriculum to be more inclusive and culturally relevant. Yet making changes to teaching and learning systems can be politically charged and fraught with challenges. Furman (2012) observes that “educational leaders must be proactive in orienting and organizing instruction and rethink the nature of curriculum around the values of social justice” (p. 197). Educators thus must be vigilant about crafting learning environments that are equitable for all students.

Concepts of instructional leadership have shifted dramatically in the last two decades, and school leaders are no longer responsible for directly managing instructional content. Instead they must seek ways to support accountability for a socially just pedagogy, as demonstrated by Bernie and Gayle, in particular. Marie, an especially skilled content teacher, wishes she could be more influential over the curriculum at Bay, but she recognizes her teachers’ limitations in skill and comfort.

Horng and Loeb (2010) insist that instructional leaders have considerable influence over teaching and learning in the classroom, and understanding culturally relevant pedagogy and framing instructional practices through a social justice lens is particularly important. This implies the necessity of examining not only school culture and systems, but also centering the curriculum on social justice values. Principals and Assistant Principals may have to take the position of standing up to parents, the district

Board of Trustees, or teachers' unions and other stakeholders when challenging a discriminatory system.

In the school the broader picture is helping my teachers be aware that some of the curriculum, and some of the readings they choose...is to understand what that triggers in the young person and how they might feel about it. They have to be careful and understanding that it isn't just an assignment, that there is an interaction between the student and the curriculum. We are looking to weave in all of the pieces so that all young people are represented, and queer youth and queer story is all represented, and being able to choose materials and make sure that those are brought in. (Gayle, Revolution HS)

At Revolution and Alder, teachers have been creating their own curriculum and finding their own academic resources to shape many of their classes. AJ teaches a class on gender roles in literature, noting that although there were questions about it from Gayle initially, the class worked out and was a great learning experience. It is important for Gayle and AJ that students are able to see themselves reflected in the curriculum. AJ was tasked with developing a comprehensive course that broadened definitions of gender, using contemporary texts as the academic foundation.

Pushing curricular boundaries embodies Britzman's (1995) view that queer theory, when applied to the educational space, can assert "choice and visibility" (p. 152) in classrooms and provoke pedagogical expansion. Teachers at both Revolution and Alder are supported by their leaders to challenge limits to integration of queer issues, and they are given creative license to use their professional judgment, content knowledge, and social justice motivation to do so.

Levi, for instance, recently taught a course on Bioethics. He used an ethical question as the final essay: "If we were to determine the gene for homosexuality, would it be ethical to check for it in pregnancy? Would you if you had the opportunity? What

would you do if you found out your child was going to be gay?” Levi was nervous about backlash from parents and students, but moved ahead because “Gayle had my back. She said it was common core to the max.” Levi describes his growing experience with expanding his curriculum to be more inclusive:

When it comes to gender issues, I'm like I'm barely wading in the kiddie end of the pool. I've got little floaters on and everything. And so I have enough to teach my lesson about it, like in the civil rights class I just started teaching about the Navajo and their five genders. (Levi, Revolution HS)

Students from Revolution, in particular, articulate the impact of a queer inclusive curriculum. For several students, there is a feeling of pride in seeing themselves reflected in the school curriculum.

When I came in, I came in to (AJ's) Gender Roles in Literature class. My sexuality isn't really why I came here, but it made me feel much more proud of it. (Louis, Revolution HS)

It was awesome reading (a book) called Luna and it was about a trans girl, and there was The Perks of Being a Wallflower which has a gay guy...it just made me feel like I was being heard. (Izzy, Revolution HS)

Not all students, however, are excited about the inclusive curriculum, observes AJ. She recognizes the struggle of one student in particular who had his own positional feelings of centrality challenged by her inclusivity:

I had one student write me a note at the end of the year just saying that he really didn't enjoy my class because he didn't feel like any of it pertained to him. This was a straight, White, male student who didn't even want to explore concepts of masculinity because for whatever reason that made him uncomfortable. And he wasn't willing to engage in that. But even though he left my class angry, I still am glad that he had that pre-exposure to it. So maybe the next person that talks to him about this or the next class he takes will go a little easier. (AJ, Revolution HS)

By comparison, Marie had her own experience in the 1990s as a student teacher, when her principal and master teacher did not support her efforts to address homophobia in a social studies curriculum.

I was teaching 10th grade World History and Senior Economics...It was when the social studies' framework wasn't placed. There weren't even content standards. I realized really quickly that there was a ton of homophobia. Just logically, I called in PFLAG. I knew to do permission slips. I had PFLAG come in and I got called into the principal's office. I almost got kicked out of the school. The principal said, "Why did you do this? What were you thinking? You didn't tell anyone you are going to do this. This is Mormon community." I was in trouble. My master teacher was mad at me. Everyone was mad and I didn't even know that would be a bad thing to do. (Marie, Bay HS)

The difference between Marie's and Necie's experiences exemplifies the impact that a queer-supportive environment can have on teaching and learning about gender. With Bernie's support, Necie was able to expand understandings in a recent novelistic analysis.

I just taught Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil...I just thought it was a really rich discussion. It's the only book that I would know about to teach to bring in some of those topics: homosexuality, transgender, status – in so many ways. So it definitely has informed and changed my teaching and things that I want to bring to these students because it's important to them. (Necie, Alder HS)

Curriculum, materials and professional development. Without curriculum, materials, and queer-inclusive content standards, motivated teachers are forced to find resources and create their own lessons. Even with the legislative support of the FAIR Act of 2010, schools in California still do not provide sufficient professional development, curriculum, or materials to meet the law's inclusive mandate. Levi echoes this issue: "I think that one of the biggest barriers is not only support for the administrators, but for history teachers. You need some damn curriculum for it. You need primary sources and

that stuff isn't easy to find." When school administrators act as instructional leaders for their schools, creating and supporting queer inclusive teaching and learning spaces can be a challenging task.

An interesting facet of study findings is that one of the most prominent self-identified queer activists in the school district, Peter, works at Bay HS. He serves as the county representative for the School Climate Coalition and is frequently called on to help facilitate meetings and represent queer voice in school district situations. Yet he not only declined to participate in this study, but students from the focus group at Bay HS express disappointment and frustration over his lack of advocacy and involvement in their challenges to school policies and practices. Several students also report that Peter does not incorporate any queer perspectives into his traditional, teacher-centered instruction and curriculum, regardless of the fact that he attended the one FAIR Act professional development provided by the county office of education several years earlier.

This contradiction in roles and instructional norms is concerning and relatively common, since the translation of beliefs into practice can elude even queer activist teachers. According to Ixchel at Bay, many students would welcome more inclusive content, but she recognizes the systemic instructional challenges of implementing the FAIR Act.

We have all these laws but no one actually made a curriculum and no one gave any time to teachers to make curriculum. So nothing was done with it and now we still don't learn any of these things in our classrooms unless you have a teacher who is passionate about the issue and makes time for it. But it's not like anything happened with it. (Ixchel, Bay HS)

Interestingly, when Marie is asked about queer inclusive teaching and learning practices at her site (especially since I knew that Peter was on staff at Bay HS), she confesses that

we haven't done anything around that and partly, because, well, you that this teaching and curriculum and all that is all about the people you have. And if you don't have the people who can do it right, then you don't even want to go there because they'll do it wrong. (Marie, Bay HS)

Hiring effective social justice teachers is one of the most important functions school principals can perform. However, the decisions for hiring staff are often controlled by many factors, and principals do not always have ultimate authority over hires. For teachers already on staff, being able to effectively deliver socially just pedagogy depends largely on their experience and beliefs about pedagogy and social justice. Many school leaders have to work with the teachers who have been in place for any number of years, with varying levels of cultural proficiency and interest in acquiring inclusive practices.

Angela, a student from Bay high school, reflects on her desire to see more inclusive curriculum facilitated by the teacher. With the lack of professional development in culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum, however, these innovations are generally introduced by students instead of teachers.

The teachers I've had have all been open to me doing history projects and things like that on queer history, but they've mentioned maybe once in two years any part of queer history, and it was for like two minutes of discussion. It feels like it only happens if a student brings it up instead of a teacher teaching you about it, and I'd like to see that now. (Angela, Bay HS)

The setting of a smaller school environment, especially a charter school where teachers are allowed more flexibility and creativity with curriculum content, seems to enhance queer inclusivity in teaching and learning. The cogs of the large public educational

systems can turn slowly, and changes in teaching and learning practices are often incremental. Innovation, then, may be most likely to emerge from pockets of social justice teachers with a passion for creating their own materials, activities, and curriculum.

Yet guiding instructional direction remains an expectation of school administrators. By integrating queer funds of knowledge (Yosso, 2005) into curriculum and instruction, educators can work to eradicate the queer cultural deficit that is still pervasive in schools. Educators have the opportunity to re-center “whose knowledge counts and whose knowledge is discounted” (Yosso, 2005, p. 69), and several of the educators in this study are actively working to shift the instructional paradigm.

Findings Summary

Transformative leadership behaviors are described by Leithwood and Jantzi (2005) as “idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration” (p. 180.) These attributes are demonstrated throughout the analysis of findings by the three leaders profiled, as indicated by responses from teachers and students. Bernie and Gayle model social justice motivation and individualized connection with students and staff. Marie in particular holds students at the center of her logical decision-making and enforcement of policies and practices.

Examining the personal, interpersonal, structural, and instructional ways in which the leaders in this study support queer inclusion highlights foundational strategies for educational leadership practice and preparation. The lessons demonstrated in the study have the potential to inform principal preparation programs and strategies for learning, and they underscore the value of relationships, caring, and communication. The data also

indicate that using positional authority to interrupt and intervene in institutional discriminatory practices and demand inclusion requires courage and skill.

Many of the practices described by the leaders and experienced by their school communities are authentically personal and experimental. Because of their deeply held beliefs about social justice education, Bernie, Gayle, and Marie use their leadership positions to interrogate problematic systems and practices. Though they have received little specific skill professional development on social justice leadership and queer inclusion, and though relevant guidelines or professional standards in these areas do not yet exist, the three leaders use professional judgment and skill to improve their leadership practice and move their schools toward inclusive practices.

Surprises for me in study findings have come with my realization of the depth of personal caring and relationship exhibited by the three leaders. Their personal connections to social justice are profound, infusing their decision-making and daily routines, and their interactions with students, staff, and parents. Bernie, Gayle, and Marie define leadership success as ensuring support, advocacy, and voice for those previously marginalized. All three are alike in their humility, and display no ego regarding how their largely intuitive practices might inform other principals or administrator preparation programs. Chapter Five outlines those implications for practice and preparation—describing promising personal, interpersonal, structural, and instructional supports for queer inclusion in schools based on the findings of this study.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The following conclusions and recommendations outline substantive system changes in leadership preparation, program supports, school systems and infrastructure, and legislative action. In each of the four overarching themes of this study, a central finding is that the educator serves as a protective agent, and all three case study participants feel strongly about their role as student advocates. Whether as a teacher or a school leader, the positional, relational, and instructional authority of educators is of primary importance in the lives and experiences of youth in schools.

The four major themes established in the findings—Personal Connection, Interpersonal Engagement, Challenging Policies and Structures, and Instructional Engagement—illuminate strategic and purposeful leadership behaviors and skills that can advance queer inclusion and feelings of belonging, safety, and visibility in schools. These social justice leadership behaviors and skills may be synthesized to develop a queer transformative leadership theory, which can serve as the foundation for disruptive and inclusive educational leadership.

Throughout this investigation, I aimed to determine how educational leaders facilitate queer inclusion in their schools. My goal was to identify characteristics, practices, and behaviors of courageous school leaders in order to develop theory to support queer inclusion. I collected data addressing the initial question: how can educational leadership support inclusion of queer experience?

Personal Implications

Transformative and reflective adult learning. The most powerful personal elements emerging from data collection are the transformative learning experiences experienced by the three leaders. All three were motivated to do social justice education work by personally transformative experiences and the belief that they could positively impact the educational experiences of youth. By examining their own biases and prejudices and actively seeking out learning experiences as adults, they model the tenet of the life-long learner. By conscientiously reflecting on their skills and deficits, relationships and communication, and impact and responsibility in their schools, Marie, Gayle, and Bernie challenge themselves.

Personal interactions with students, teachers, parents, and others involved in community partnerships provide valuable counternarratives, which create the pedagogical entry points described by Taylor (2007). Students describe their feelings of validation when the principals listen to them and engage in dialogue. Gayle's recognition that students need to be known and acknowledged to feel safe and comfortable on a school campus is another key finding. Bernie and Marie exhibit similar understandings, knowing that authentic and caring relationships with students are valuable and have long-lasting impact on school culture, and ultimately, on openness to learning.

Although the principals each completed leadership preparation programs at universities in California, some with a stated social justice program focus, the curriculum, program, and discussions in their credential work did not include any queer theory or practice on queer inclusive work in schools. Some teachers had more queer inclusive credentialing experiences, yet their programs still exhibited a wide and inconsistent range

of comfort and visibility of social justice issues. Overall, teacher credential programs were described by teachers as more queer-inclusive than administrator preparation programs. Because of their lack of preparation in this area in their formal education, Bernie, Gayle and Marie joined professional organizations like the Youth Alliance Committee, and connected to community agencies like the LGBTIQ Center and School Climate Coalition, which provided a broader range of learning to support their work as educational leaders. According to Trujillo & Cooper (2014), a concern of the architects of the Principal Leadership Institute was that students “would lack exposure to the lived experiences of the students with whom they work, and thereby fail to maintain both realistic *and* high expectations for success (p. 145.) Given the importance of connecting the whole student to academic achievement, it is heartening that the three principals in this study intentionally sought out venues to connect with the lived experiences of their students in order to better understand and support them in their schools.

All three case study participants describe the benefit of collaborative critical reflection and dialogue with professional colleagues. Because Bernie and Gayle, as partners, have a built-in support system, they have routine dialogue and problem-solving opportunities. Marie expresses frustration at the lack of time available for professional reflection with job-alike colleagues, since leadership meetings in her district generally center on technocratic school business rather than reflection on practice.

Learning from students. The current youth’s knowledge and experience with issues of gender and sexuality far outstrip prior generations’ understandings. Primarily due to increased social media interaction and access to technology, students in high schools in 2016 are exploring and sharing narratives of sexuality and gender, and learning

from their peers and others, at a rate that may be surprising or even alarming to adults around them. Students in focus groups used expansive language, easily discussed disruption of gender categories and limitations, and described inclusive sexualities they had presented to their teachers and school administrators to help the older generation learn. Because principals and teachers are authentically involved and open to the learning, students feel respected and listened to; the adults normally accustomed to positions of power and control become the learners in these instances.

Interpersonal Implications

Caring relationships. Genuine caring and personal relationships among students, teachers, and school administrators help dismantle barriers constructed by hierarchical systems. The principals in this study actively pursue caring relationships with the people in their school community, especially students. The skills of creating and modeling caring relationships and engaging in meaningful dialogue have enabled Bernie and Gayle, in particular, to create safe and welcoming school environments that students perceive as healthy. They understand that leaders set the tone for school relationships, and from their demonstrated behaviors, they take that responsibility seriously. Teachers and students acknowledge the importance of caring relationships as well, agreeing that the leaders profiled are accomplished in building effective relationships which are central to the feeling of schools.

The three principals believe that visibility and modeling are necessary tools for educational leaders. When Bernie and Gayle model caring authentic relationships, their students and teachers notice. Similarly, Bernie and Gayle's visibility in Queer Straight Alliance activities and in school functions promotes the concept of inclusivity for the

school. Marie's participation with her school's QSA, as well as her collaboration with a respected teacher to implement queer-inclusive professional development, demonstrates her commitment to advocacy and modeling social justice action.

The language of leadership needs to be inclusive, to involve communicating for change, and to intervene actively and disrupt when necessary. Bernie, Gayle, and Marie use dialoguing with students, parents, and teachers both to guide and to advocate. Having courageous conversations with their constituents—and sometimes with superiors such as School Board members, superintendents, and district office personnel—is a brave act for a school principal. Clarity about one's social justice agenda supports this behavior. The principals in this study welcome such dialogue, and approach potential conflict with confidence and fortitude.

Reaching out. Community partnerships and agencies external to the school system can serve as the source of programs, resources, and professional development for schools. Principals in this study demonstrate committed involvement with community agencies across the board, learning from them personally and inviting them into their schools for professional development and student or parent support. Because administrative leadership credential programs have some ways to go to implement social justice perspectives, community connections like the Gender Spectrum, School Climate Coalition and LGBTQ Committee must be used to offer social justice perspectives for current and future educational leaders.

Structural Implications

Interruption, intervention and inclusion. Though there are many people who make up a school, it is particularly important for school leaders to take an active and

visible role in counteracting discriminatory practices. Marie, Bernie, and Gayle purposefully insert themselves into discriminatory situations as disruptors, advocating change in systems, policies, and behaviors. Using relationships, constructive and courageous conversations, and positional authority, they promote a social justice agenda in their schools. Strategic and skillful dialoguing with students, parents, teachers, and community partners builds networks of support in the school environment.

In particular, frustration over the limitations of school student information systems (SIS) is evident across all three schools studied. In response to these limitations, the principals in the study use their positional authority to serve students by transgressively bypassing binary gender selections and legal name requirements mandated in the SIS, while maintaining student confidentiality and respect for their identities. Making decisions that are student-centered in this regard can sometimes put principals and other school staff at risk of being out of compliance with CALPADS and other national or state regulatory databases. Yet participants feel that using their positional authority for the purpose of preserving and supporting their students' dignity is worth the risk.

For each of the three leaders, the school district office or county office of education has failed to provide professional development regarding new legislation and policies. In response to this, Bernie, Marie and Gayle have educated themselves and others about policy changes, and have learned from students and teachers. This has built their capacity to advocate for the implementation of new facilities in compliance with AB1266. They also still struggle to source curriculum and provide support for the FAIR Act and the new California Healthy Youth Act (SB329). The leadership provided by the

participants to educate others in areas of new legislation and policy extends upward into district offices, and laterally into their home schools.

Conscious rejection of a position of neutrality is a theme evident in many aspects of the study's findings. The leaders profiled understand the value of purposeful intervention, and they do so employing a social justice lens. They routinely question school practices they view as discriminatory—not necessarily intending to disrupt heteronormativity, but because they see certain practices as unjust. Lack of fear regarding their advocacy and leadership is also evident. All three principals recognize their responsibility to use positional authority when appropriate to create or maintain safe and inclusive learning environments. Gayle's stance on being compassionate, gentle, and respectful, for instance, is balanced by her firm boundaries that interrupt discriminatory language or behavior in her school by using relational influence and assertive communication.

Skilled social justice principals understand that they cannot construct systems of support for all students without the engagement of a skilled school team. They thus work diligently to create shared understandings and staff values that focus on student needs. All three leaders embrace the need to develop a web of distributed leadership in their schools. Teachers at Revolution and Alder, for example, demonstrate a high level of respect that is facilitated by their systems of distributed leadership, feelings of shared purpose, and social justice challenges successfully addressed in their schools.

The impact of the Queer Straight Alliance clubs on each campus supports the development of transgressive capital and the sharing of community cultural wealth by queer students and their allies. The visibility of the clubs gives voice to queer experience

in schools, and provides safe space for students when needed. The activities of the QSAs range from holding a Pronoun Awareness Week to hosting fundraisers and participating in the Gay Pride Parade and other culturally affirming activities. All three of the principals have public and supportive relationships with their QSAs. Bernie frequently visits his school's club, sits in on their discussions, and participates in Coming Out Day. Gayle supports her QSA's fundraising by providing professional development for the club and teacher advisors, and by marching with the club in the Gay Pride Parade. Marie serves as an advisor for the QSA at Bay and has twice been nominated for the Queer Youth Ally Award.

School structure and impact on relationships. Smaller school environments offer closer, more personal relationships and communication among staff and students because of having more potential for direct access to relationships. Positive and personal interactions with students at the school are essential for building trust, and for creating a safe and secure school environment. Students from all three of the schools specifically note the quality of the relationships they have with their school's leader, and the impact that has on their sense of belonging. For students at Alder and Revolution, the small school size facilitates personal relationships that make them feel supported and acknowledged. The access to adult and student relationships dramatically changed the way students felt about their school principal. Examining ways to structure access to adult relationships is central to feelings of comfort, safety and acknowledgement.

Instructional Implications

“When someone with the authority of a teacher describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and

saw nothing” (Adrienne Rich, 2007). The importance of inclusive teaching and learning practices cannot be overstated. Although the principals in this study still struggle to promote culturally relevant curriculum in their schools, their awareness of the issue puts them ahead of many other school leaders. The conversations they have with teachers are starting to push the instructional envelope, as they open dialogue on equity and bias in instructional practices. Marie’s school district, in addition, has been working for several years with an equity consultant hired to help teachers examine their practices related to race and disability. Those topics can provide an opening to discuss queer inclusion.

Each principal notes the lack of professional development and support available for implementing inclusive instructional practices. Although there is much research on culturally relevant pedagogy, and even a mandate for queer inclusive curriculum provided by the FAIR Act, there is little professional development, few materials, and no accountability for such classroom practices. The local County Office of Education held one FAIR Act professional development in the past five years, which was poorly attended except for a cadre of teachers, plus Bernie from Alder.

The principals instead rely on their creative, social justice-oriented teachers to develop inclusive courses and source their own materials for their high school classes. Gender and sexuality-inclusive courses offered in biology and literature at Revolution have been created solely from the teachers’ desire to be inclusive, with the principals’ support of their explorations. The small charter school experience offers teachers flexibility to experiment with and expand content offerings. Most students express feelings of pride and belonging when provided with queer inclusive lessons, enjoying

seeing themselves finally reflected in the curriculum. For one White male student, however, having his experience de-centered generated discomfort to the point of anger.

Queer Transformative Leadership Theory

The findings of this study suggest the broad outlines of a Queer Transformative Leadership Theory (QTLT). Such a theory would utilize transgressive capital by leading with caring and authentic relationships, as well as modeling courageous dialogue and visibility in the educational environment in order to support paradigm shifts on queer inclusive practices in education. Transgressive capital, activated by school leaders, can specifically challenge the institutional, social, and instructional boundaries maintained by the educational system (Pennell, 2015).

Three foundational theories are proposed as central QTLT: adult transformative learning theory, queer theory, and critical race theory. Adult transformative learning theory supports learners to examine and confront values and beliefs through transformative pedagogical entry points and experiential learning. It encourages critical self-reflection that can result in paradigm shifts, and can catalyze changes in leadership skills necessary for social justice work in education (Brown, 2004; Mezirow, 1997; Taylor, 2007). Queer theory challenges the dominant binary, entrenched heteronormative educational structures, and deconstructs boundaries of relationship and power (Britzman, 1995; Mayo, 2007). Critical race theory offers a framework of oppositional scholarship and a legal analysis of inequity. It analyzes power structures in education, and advocates counter narrative story telling to amplify the voices and lived experiences of marginalized groups (Delgado, 1989; Tate, 1997). When activated with foundational leadership theories (specifically instructional leadership, distributed leadership, social justice

leadership and transformative leadership), QTLT can be demonstrated through the educational leadership responsibilities of the school leader.

QTLT can be embodied in the following leadership strategies:

- Intentional opposition to neutrality
- Courageous confrontational and collaborative dialogue
- Use of positional authority to interrupt inequitable structures
- Visible and inclusive social justice leadership practices.

QTLT has the potential to interrupt the “foundational cultural logic that produces and sustains inequitable structures and practices” (O’Malley & Capper, 2015, p. 30).

QTLT aims to disrupt inequities via use of positional authority, broaden perspectives in teaching and learning, support expansive non-binary thinking and language. It queers educational spaces by interrogating systems, policies and educational infrastructures and communities. Positioning the verb “to queer” in this sense refocuses the leadership work on the “constant need for critical attention to the processes of subjectification” (Mayo, 2007, p. 80.)

The educational leaders in this study have demonstrated queer transformative leadership through a variety of means: constructive discourse and dialogue, situational influence, distributed leadership and support, instructional advocacy and intervention, and experiential social justice.

Recommendations

Recommendations that emerge from study findings highlight the need for leadership preparation reform in a variety of domains: social justice standards and program alignment; inclusion of queer theory in academic space; and the explicit

teaching of queer transformative leadership skills and behaviors for future educational leaders. Policy and structure recommendations underscore the need to reconstruct systems in schools that are expansive and inclusive, and to provide legal and structural support. Future research should address gaps not considered in this study, such as intersectionality in the school environment, sharing best practices, and the potential transgressive impact of queer educational leaders in their schools.

Leadership Preparation

Begin with a social justice framework. Every course of study requires a framework. In 2012, the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) published *Designing Purposeful and Coherent Leadership Preparation Curriculum: A Curriculum Mapping Guide*. The program philosophy of this document is articulated in part by Darling-Hammond (2012), who states that “having well-defined and well-integrated theories of action for learning [is] more likely to promote adult learning and leadership development and, in turn, produce graduates who are more effective as school leaders, engaged in school improvement work” (p. 2). Providing structure for social justice oriented programs is essential. In this document, the authors outline that a quality leadership preparation curriculum does the following:

- integrates important disciplinary theories and concepts;
- links disciplinary concepts to internship experiences;
- provides a logical array of coursework, learning activities, and program structures;

- frames content around the principles of adult learning theory and link theory and practice; and
- aligns to research-based leadership standards.

(University Council for Educational Administration, 2012).

While the UCEA (2012) broadly defines a curriculum framework for leadership programs, it also recommends coursework and fieldwork aligned to the ISLLC (Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium) standards (p. 1). Central guiding philosophies note that strong curriculum and internship experiences combined with reflective and analytical practices will help connect practitioners to authentic work in schools. The UCEA philosophy makes reference to the importance of adult learning theory, stating, “Adult learning theory suggests that to be transformative, learning experiences must have purposeful content that uses strategies to maximize learning, learning transfer, and leadership identity formation” (p. 3). Recognizing that these “pedagogical entry points” (Taylor, 2007) can enable transformative experiences for promising education leaders is essential to administrative credentialing and preparation programs. Understanding the theoretical foundations of learning and leadership and how they can enhance practice is essential for future leaders.

While standards are not the ultimate solution to providing structure for professional preparation, a relevant framework is still necessary, and starting with standards may prove useful. Organizing a learning framework absent any standards could potentially devolve into a program by program (or instructor, or school) interpretation of relevant knowledge for educational practice.

Position theory in practice. The pattern of a lack of social justice focus in educational leadership preparation programs surfaces repeatedly in this study, mirroring similar patterns evident in the literature (Furman, 2012; Capper & O'Malley, 2015; Capper, Theoharis, 2007; Theoharis, & Sebastian, 2006). Leadership preparation programs have not yet expanded, in particular, to recognize and validate queer experience in education.

The authors cited above offer conceptual frameworks for integrating social justice and queer perspectives into leadership preparation. Furman (2012) outlines six characteristics that can create a framework for the educational leader: action-oriented and transformative; inclusive and democratic; committed and persistent; relational and caring; reflective; and oriented toward a socially just pedagogy. Theoharis (2007) describes the practice of resistance and self-care techniques that are required for social justice leaders to maintain energy and equilibrium in the battle for advocacy. Capper, Theoharis, and Sebastian (2006) suggest a vertical framework created with horizontal and vertical dimensions. The horizontal dimension consists of critical consciousness, knowledge, and skills; the vertical dimension focuses on curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. According to Trujillo & Cooper (2014), this framework “provides the most comprehensive tool for judging and developing a program’s work in this area (p. 149).

Leadership preparation programs further require pedagogy related to skills (Capper, Theoharis & Sebastian, 2006, p. 217), which should purposefully teach emerging leaders how to transpose the Furman’s (2012) characteristics onto daily routines and tasks of life in schools. Culturally proficient understandings of gender and sexuality should be pervasive in K-12 curriculum and principal preparation programs.

This would require dramatically reframing the current deficit-based analysis and introducing asset-based theories as a responsibility of leadership when working in schools.

Integrate queer theory and queer cultural capital. A recent study by Mattheis, Perey, and Royaltey-Quandt (2014) reveals a lack of queer theory and inclusive curriculum in California State University doctoral programs in education. Studies by Capper and O'Malley (2014) and Capper, Theoharis, and Sebastian (2006) analyze leadership preparation programs across the United States in relation to queer inclusive curriculum and find such content wanting, if not completely absent. "Introduction of queer theory expands the educational space to allow for inclusion" (Renn, 2010 p. 132). Investing queer theory with the same level of significance and focus as other critical, leadership, and organizational theories would re-center queer experience in higher education programs and diminish its marginalization.

Recently, Trujillo & Cooper (2014) conducted a study of the course syllabi offered through the Principal Leadership Institute (PLI). Since 1999, the PLI has endeavored to create a social justice-oriented leadership preparation program at U.C.L.A. and U.C. Berkeley. Although the University of California has constructed the Principal Leadership Institute (PLI) specifically to "guide pedagogy, curriculum, assessment, and practice according to a social justice framework" (Trujillo & Cooper, 2014, p. 143) queer theory and queer inclusive teaching and learning still appear to be marginalized topics under the social justice umbrella in the instance of the programs studied..

Explicitly teach authentic skills required for social justice leadership. Leadership preparation programs continue to focus primarily on the technical and

managerial skills required for school administration. Emerging frameworks such as the UCEA Curriculum Mapping Guide (2012) offer some hope of shifting the graduate-level conversation on foundational requirements for leadership preparation, by introducing the need to integrate transformative learning theory and critical consciousness. Although these topics could be seen as “soft skills” that are difficult to teach overtly, the importance of helping leaders develop these skills is self-evident. The following skills come from Furman’s (2012) attributes of a social justice leader, and should be considered for addition to leadership preparation programs.

Action-oriented and transformative. Educational leaders are exposed to a range of theoretical and practical knowledge, depending on their preparation programs. Although they may understand that they will be considered proactive change agents who must acknowledge and challenge systems of discrimination and marginalization, aspiring leaders seldom receive professional development on how to be activists for enduring and transformative change in their schools (Furman, 2012, p. 196). Teaching activist leadership behaviors has the potential to radicalize and disrupt outdated, hierarchical notions of school leadership that still dominate.

Committed and persistent. The capacity to intervene, interrupt, and dismantle unjust school systems is a courageous skill. Proficiency in this skill comes primarily through on-the-job experience in school leadership and commitment to a social justice agenda—rather than through preparation programs. Using positional authority skillfully is a requirement of the social justice leader, and it involves the development of specialized leadership language and the ability to facilitate bold and productive conversations. Developing these skills could potentially be embedded in principal

preparation through role play, dialogue, experiential learning, interning, mentoring, and coaching. Future educational leaders should be knowledgeable about the potentially damaging impact of “neutrality” (Payne and Smith, 2013) in social justice work, and be skilled at using positional authority when needed to promote social justice.

Inclusive and democratic. Meaningful collaboration with the internal and external school communities builds capacity for empowering participation. Yet leaders seldom receive related professional development other than meeting planning, data-driven conversations, and rudimentary professional development for school staff. The higher-level skills of collaborative dialoguing, conflict mediation, and institutionalizing inclusive processes are primarily learned only by experience.

Relational and caring. Building and maintaining healthy and communicative relationships in schools is seldom addressed in leadership preparation programs. Demonstrating authentic caring for students and staff is mistakenly viewed as only a by-product of the leader’s character and personality, instead of as a professional requirement. Providing examples of positive relationships and sharing experiences of caring among educators can shift thinking regarding these skills.

Reflective. Self-reflection on professional practice can be a skill integrated into leadership preparation programs. Assessing levels of initial bias and resistance to particular leadership requirements, and evaluating subsequent knowledge growth and comfort, could advance leadership practice. Additionally, incorporating critical colleague protocols into professional practice can build professional networks for problem-solving and sharing best practices. This requires time, priority, and intentional valuing of these reflective practices.

Oriented toward a socially just pedagogy. Essential understandings of culturally relevant pedagogy, critical race theory, and queer theory should be core requisites of leadership. Leaders need to demonstrate proficiency in implementation, support, and accountability for these practices in the teaching and learning environment.

Barriers to social justice leadership. The toll of social justice leadership on practitioners is great. Personal and political resistance, system barriers, lack of resources and support, and dysfunctional school districts and leadership structures can inhibit the effectiveness of potential leaders. Leaders need to be taught via a formalized and overt curriculum how to take care of themselves through professional networking and collaboration, mentoring, and partnerships (Theoharis, 2007). Too often, principals are left to build collaborative partnerships on their own. Enhanced skills in professional collaboration can aid in examining deficit thinking, shifting away from technically conceived leadership.

Additionally, Brown (2004) offers specific programmatic strategies that address several important aspects of transformational adult learning that intersect with social justice pedagogy. Structuring preparation programs that purposefully confront leaders' own bias and experience can potentially enable a more intimate and challenging leadership journey. "By exposing candidates to information and ideas that they may resist and by assisting them to stretch beyond their comfort zones, a critique and transformation of hegemonic structures and ideologies can occur" (p. 78). The alternative approaches offered in Brown's (2004) framework address work specifically in the personal and interpersonal rings of the leadership experience, suggesting that social justice leadership responsibility starts with personal reflection and analysis. These approaches can

incorporate “cultural autobiographies, life histories, prejudice reduction workshops, cross-cultural interviews, educational plunges, diversity panels, reflective analysis journals, and activist assignments” (p. 81).

Incorporating these pedagogical entry points (Taylor, 2007) into leadership preparation programs integrates experiential learning, which can be valuable for educational leaders responsible for system-wide equity. Essential to personal and interpersonal learning is Brown’s (2004) belief that “providing adults with a learning opportunity to interact with someone from another ethnic, socioeconomic, religious, or sexual-orientation background is a useful strategy in supporting cross-cultural development and respect” (p. 94.) Although Brown did not include gender or gender expression in her analysis, these experiences are also critical for expanding understanding.

Train leaders to implement legal mandates in the their schools. School principals are routinely informed of new state, federal, and district mandates through memos, professional networking, or newsletters from district or county offices. Beyond this, however, leaders require professional development and support to enact new legislation, such as recent California bills AB537, AB1266, SB329 and SB48. Without structural support, materials, and professional development, the introduction and accountable implementation of new legislation is poorly managed and unevenly addressed. Professional organizations such as ACSA (Association of California School Administrators) could provide more direct leadership professional development on new legislation affecting schools. School district and county offices of education could also offer professional development on legal mandates. Such professional development could

include parent and community communication, reviews of students' rights and educators' responsibilities, and curriculum and instruction implications. ACSA, for instance, offers a Leading for Equity workshop and professional development series that is beginning to include LGBT concerns related to educational equity and leadership.

Develop entry criteria for leadership programs that are aligned with social justice work. Applications for educational leadership programs should require thorough pre-entry self-analysis of candidate dispositions related to bias, cultural understanding, and openness to transformative learning. Selection for educational leadership positions should be a rigorous process, considering the magnitude of responsibility for social justice work required by 21st century school leaders (Brown, 2004). Faculty in administrative preparation programs should be similarly reviewed to ensure a focus on equity (Jennings, 2012). Conducting pre- and post-assessments to measure growth in such areas as critical consciousness, understanding inclusive theoretical frameworks, and emerging skills in structural and instructional social justice education could ensure the development of capable and committed leadership candidates.

Additionally, leadership evaluation frameworks (like the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, or CPSELs) could be augmented to include specific social justice expectations related to inclusive teaching and learning practices, implementation and accountability for inclusive legislation, and maintaining safe and welcoming school culture and climate. Existing standards and elements of CPSELs are defined too broadly to provide specific guidance on the daily practice of social justice. Conducting an LGBT equity audit (McKenzie & Scheurich, 2004) in schools and university programs could also assist in identifying strengths and weaknesses.

Learn from community partnerships. Leadership programs could benefit from partnering with professional organizations to incorporate their research and expertise into curriculum. Organizations such as Gender Spectrum and GLSEN conduct national research on queer visibility and inclusion and provide gender and sexuality education by field experts. While such partnerships have been beneficial to the schools in this study, parents, the general community, and leadership preparation programs do not yet routinely partner with these groups. Providing research-based foundational knowledge regarding gender and sexuality for school leaders through partnerships with queer-focused community organizations could fill a void in preparation programs.

Policy and Structure

Restructure SIS and gender and sexuality binary systems. Legal advocacy at the state level for data system changes could potentially disrupt the binary standards currently used by student information systems such as CALPADS, and could filter down to district student information systems such as AERIES, Power School, and Infinite Campus. While these rigid systems are being challenged on an informal basis at the school or district level by those with access and authority, system-wide changes in the naming, coding, and structuring of student record keeping requires further policy action.

Facilitate closer relationships between adults and students. The school principal usually does not control school size. Schools in the United States typically range from hundreds of students to thousands, and the ability to manage a large school environment is a highly skilled leadership quality. Since this study suggests that smaller educational structures can foster familiar relationships that lead to inclusive and comfortable settings, supporting more meaningful relationships and communication

seems desirable. Well-established approaches to creating more access to caring adults for students should be considered: breaking up large student populations into academic or interest-based “houses”; or creating advisory sections, home departments, or grade level groupings. Constructing more intimate settings for students, with greater access to caring adult relationships and more direct communication, may support improved feelings of connection to schools and higher academic achievement.

Recommendations for Future Research

Sharing best practices. While this study focuses on promising leadership practices of a small sample of secondary schools in Northern California, schools all over the United States are grappling with changing perspectives and laws on queer inclusion in schools, and there is a national need to improve instructional leadership practice.

Conferences such as UCEA and AERA (American Educational Research Association) offer opportunities for practitioners and researchers to share emerging research and discuss theoretical positioning, but the research shared in these conferences does not yet result in practical implementation of social justice work at the school site level. The challenge is to connect researchers to practitioners and close the philosophical divide between theory and practice.

At the UCEA conference in 2015, respected educational researchers and university professors presented on the challenges of queer inclusive schools, but they did so from the academic distance of the researcher, rather than the practitioner who is in contact with K-12 students on a daily basis. Several researchers discussed and debated the public commodity of queer educational research, which was featured at the AERA conference in a newly published book about LGBT research in education. The wealth of

epistemological knowledge and scholarship demonstrated by such researchers has tremendous value to practice if practical connections can be made to the K-12 school leaders on the ground. Closing the divide between practice and research is therefore an essential recommendation for continuing progress, and should remain a primary area of future emphasis.

There are also notable practices emerging in school districts in different parts of the country that could benefit the practice of educational leadership throughout the country. For example, Dr. Laura Taylor, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Achievement from the Champaign-Urbana, Illinois School District, was named by GLSEN as the Educator of the Year in 2014 for her support and promotion of inclusive and protective policies and practices in her district. She was also the recent recipient of the McKinley Social Justice Award. Dr. Taylor has guided significant work in her district to examine inherent bias in policies and decision-making. Together with a team of social justice educators, the school district has developed a framework for social justice decision-making and policy implementation to guide how decisions are made regarding curriculum and program implementation, as well as policies and practices in the school district. Learning from such promising practices could benefit the field of educational leadership in general.

Policy and legislation. Lawmakers have initiated gender- and sexuality-inclusive policies for schools in curriculum, athletics and activities, and anti-discrimination and anti-harassment. They should similarly consider adding a mandate for skilled professional development, curriculum frameworks, and materials when drafting inclusive legislation, since prior practice has been to legislate mandates with no support or

accountability for implementation. Accountability for such new legislation as AB1266 and SB329 does not yet exist, and absent clear accountability measures, implementation of inclusive practices is left to the local sites or districts to manage, and school principals to uphold.

Intersectionality. The leaders profiled in this study, as well as the majority of teachers and students in this study, all identified as White. This limits the usefulness of the study, as it was not possible to analyze the intersecting range of identities (race, class, gender, orientation, among others) that reflect the authentic lived experiences of many California students and adults. “Taking an intersectional approach that explores multiple, interlocking forms of identity can help students see that issues are connected and complex, and to see the ways that their own lives intersect with others” (Pennell, 2015, p. 11). While queer issues in schools remain an under-researched area, research on the intersectionality of queer identities with race, culture of origin, disability, language, and socioeconomic status is even more marginalized and should thus be addressed.

Queer principals and their roles in queer inclusive schools. Recently, there has been a growing number of studies conducted on queer principals and their roles in schools. Highlighting the visibility and leadership of queer school administrators is significant, especially due to continuing homophobic workplace discrimination and lack of employment protections in U.S. schools. However, many researchers still center their analyses on the fear and invisibility experienced by queer leaders, and they default to deficit framing to illuminate strands of resilience and resistance. Future research with queer educational populations should instead focus proactively on the community cultural wealth modeled by queer school leaders, and the positive impacts they make on their

school environments. Queer leaders can demonstrate aspirational, familial, social, navigational, resistant, and transgressive capital from the standpoint of positional authority, which highlights the essential role of inclusive leadership for youth in our schools (Yosso, 2005; Pennell, 2015).

Promising practices of queer inclusion in leadership preparation programs.

Using the UCEA leadership preparation model, further study of educational leadership should analyze queer-inclusive programs. By comparing curriculum, teaching and learning strategies, faculty readiness and knowledge, and levels of queer inclusion, best practices for educating future leaders could be outlined and shared among faculty and professional organizations. The studies done by O'Malley and Capper (2015), Capper (2006), and Capper, Theoharis, and Sebastian (2006) could be used as baseline foundational knowledge on queer inclusion in leadership preparation programs. Since teacher preparation programs sometimes have more widely integrated queer-inclusive curriculum, materials, and practices, principal preparation programs could thus also learn from promising teacher credentialing programs.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Secondary School Principal Interview Protocol

- Please describe the education you've received to become a school leader (formal, informal and experiential) specifically as it relates to social justice and queer inclusion.
- How would you describe the diversity of your school, and the relationships and acceptance around that diversity?
- Can you describe your particular belief system around queer inclusion in schools? Include experiences that you've had that have formed those belief systems? Personal/professional?
- Describe examples of written memos, policies or personal/professional communication in which you have advocated for equity (or other)? What has your role been in those policies and communications?
- Can you describe a time when you used your positional authority to intervene in a discriminatory situation, with students, parents or teachers? District or county staff? Police or other school-related services?
- What changes have you supported in your school/district that have supported queer equity specifically? How did you do this?
- Where have the biggest challenges and supports come from? Parent community? District policies? Specific personnel? Describe specific events or situations.
- Research question: What are promising leadership practices in education that support inclusion of queer experience?

APPENDIX B

Teacher and School Staff Focus Group Protocol

- Describe the role of your principal in facilitating queer inclusion in your school setting.
- What are the specific policies and practices that your principal advocates for in connection with queer inclusion?
- Who or what have been the main challengers, and how has your principal intervened or supported?
- What type of professional development have you received to support queer inclusion in your school? Who provided it? What was the general acceptance level or response of the teaching staff?
- Research question: What are promising leadership practices in education that support inclusion of queer experience?

APPENDIX C

Student Focus Group Protocol

- Describe the school climate for queer students and issues. Describe how you think it got that way? What role did your principal play in the school culture?
- Describe the role of your principal in facilitating queer inclusion in your school setting. How have they supported and advocated for inclusion?
- What are the big issues going on regarding queer inclusion in your school? Is your school working on policy and practice changes? What is your involvement in those changes? What is the involvement of teacher or the principal?
- What does your generation have to teach the generation of teachers and administrators? What do you learn from them about this issue, and what can they learn from you?
- Do you have a specific expectation of school leadership? If you've had other principals, can you compare an effective school leader with an ineffective one?