Negotiating race and gender in marginalized work settings

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Abstract:

Building on earlier research and discourse on women in educational leadership, we conducted a qualitative secondary analysis on conceptual and empirical research. A permeating theme throughout literature was women's ability to negotiate gender and race in a historically marginalizing working environment. A key assertion made by authors is that by incorporating this dimension to their leadership can be helpful for those who search for life-sustaining contexts while simultaneously empowering themselves as agents of transformative change (Shields, 2010) who align everyday practice with core values. Implications and recommendation are offered that capture the impact of how women leadership behaviors interplay with race and gender.

Article:

INTRODUCTION

There is a collision between everyday life and systems of power in schools emblematic of larger structural issues within society. For example, race/ethnicity, class, gender, and other identity markers and their relationships with educational access and achievement are the "elephant in the room" topics in many U.S. schools especially in what is deemed to be a post-racial America. While scholars have studied inequities in schools (Jean-Marie, 2008; Mansfield, 2011; Mickelson, 2003), few practitioners interrogate how race and other identity markers shape the educational milieu of students. Rather, these issues often take a backseat to accountability measures regarding student achievement. Yet, ironically, discrimination based on students' perceived identities is often at the forefront of educational policies and practices that are related to educational access and achievement.

Rapid demographic shifts in the United States are transforming this nation into a minority-majority country by 2050. Consequently, public education systems have experienced a rapid growth in ethnic, racial, socioeconomics, linguistics, and culture, evidencing the changing faces of P-20 student populations (Milner, 2013; Sanchez, Thornton, & Usinger, 2008; Sundstrom, 2008). Although educational settings represent the diversity that is manifested in an increasingly

multicultural world (Samuels, 2014), students of color consistently are negotiating race and gender identity markers in schools. Scholars increasingly document the importance of addressing the needs of culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse students and their families (Jones & Nichols; 2013). Yet despite the shifting demographic landscape, the cultural framework of P-12 education system remains firmly aligned with middle-class values, preferences, and practices (Sundstrom, 2008).

The purpose of this chapter is to present a qualitative secondary analysis (Gladstone, Volpe, & Boydell, 2007) of conceptual and empirical studies that focused on the leadership practices of female practitioners at the secondary level engaging in discourse and practices to disrupt educational inequities for marginalized students while ensuring to meet the needs of learners. We begin by presenting an overview of the extant literature on women and educational leadership. This is followed by an analysis of research conducted in the area of equity situated within the context of social justice and democratic schooling.

LEADING AND TRANSFORMING EDUCATION AMONG WOMEN IN EDUCATION

The complex contemporary reality calls for female educational leaders to move away from the hierarchical and control-and-command environment. The key difference in female leadership styles in education lies in the development of a new leadership paradigm that considers educational leaders as change agents with a scope of influence larger than the school premises (Trinidad & Normore, 2005). According to Bascia and Young (2001), "A popular rationale for appointing women as educational administrators is not based on social justice and equality but rather joins current assumptions about the sort of leadership style that is best for the school improvement" (p. 275). Even when women are trained in similar ways as men for supervisory positions in education, they bring with them expectations and behaviors based on gender (Shakeshaft, 1993). A genderless approach to leadership recognizes neither the existence of different gender-role orientations nor the differences in the leadership functions (Shum & Cheng, 1997). In the realm of education, women in leading positions are expected to behave with sufficient authority to gain respect and maintain, and with a large dose of caring and nurturing attitudes to fulfill the gender-role expectations. Segal (1991) found that women principals with masculine gender-role orientation may emphasize control and institutional power; whereas those with feminine gender-role orientation may emphasize collaboration and interpersonal skills.

Building on the ability to mobilize people, female leadership practices resides in how women connect people, purpose, action, and practice to fulfill the moral purpose of education (Murphey, Moss, Hannah, & Wiener, 2005). As a result, these leaders build on their self-knowledge and relational nature to make school and school district decisions based on what is in the best interest of students and what is right (Furman, 2003; Helterbran & Rieg, 2004). Effective leaders extend self-knowledge to an understanding of how others perceive and react to them, using this emotional intelligence to adjust their actions for their audience (Goleman, 1995), positioning them as change agents rather than maintaining the status quo.

As change agents, female educational leaders start with improving the current situation of the school toward the image of an ideal they have envisioned. Slater and Mendez (1998) affirm that: "Imaging a future state that is desired requires a rehearsal, a run through of scenarios of

alternatives; to not just listen to others, but be able to visualize oneself doing tasks, to say to oneself, I will become a …, or I can do this or that" (p. 697). Women school leaders focus on a vision of what the school should be and where the school should head to (Fennell, 2002). Female educational leaders focus on their primary responsibility which is the care of children and their academic success. If women educational leaders are more involved with curriculum and instruction (Grogan, 1994) and accountability for student achievement becomes local (Logan, 1998), women leaders can prove that their primary responsibility is being met. Building relationships with others to achieve common goals is a recurrent topic of women in leadership positions in education. Women value close relationships with students, staff, colleagues, parents, and community members as key in school leadership (Williamson & Hudson, 2001). In schools headed by women, relationships develop constantly through spending time with people, communicating, caring about individual differences, showing concern for teachers and marginal students, and dedicating more energy to motivate others (Williamson & Hudson, 2001). Important for school leaders is also communication to keep everybody informed and to reach others (Gronn, 2003; Jean-Marie, Williams, & Sherman, 2009; Shuttleworth, 2003).

The ways women approach the job of school leadership are related to the models of leadership they encounter in their careers, particularly transformational styles, and the goals they hope to achieve through their positions as school leaders (McClellan, 2012). What influences women's leadership styles in education is the degree of identification with a leadership model, whether to be adopted or discarded. When women identify with their administrative role models, they tend toward a leadership orientation to be non-traditional, transformational or different (Peters, 2012). Inspiration and motivation in transformational leadership theory, is what drives these women to adopt this leadership style as their own. The female leadership styles in education are more democratic, participative, inclusive, and collaborative (Normore, 2004a,b). Consequently, women envision their leadership through shared problem-solving, and decision-making (Fennell, 2002; Peters, 2012). Shared decision-making and problem-solving with all involved leaves enough space to deviate from the hierarchical systems of approval and concentrate on the solution of the problem for the general good. As a result, school decisions are based on what is in the best interest of the students and what is right, not necessarily on policies (Williamson & Hudson, 2001) or power (Hall, 1994). Women leaders value having influence more than having power (Hall, 1994). Generally speaking, women leaders in education have difficulty talking about power as authority or dominance. The non-traditional view of power meets the gender-role expectations that women are not dominant or in charge (Fennell, 2002). When teaching in classrooms, women have learned to motivate students without the need to use domination (Fennell, 2002). Women leaders in education incorporate "power with" into the transformational leadership model through empowerment. Staff empowerment occurs by dispersing knowledge throughout the school (Bascia & Young, 2001; Fennell, 2002). Power also serves to build an environment of mutual trust and respect, and is linked to the principles of equity, justice, and responsible behavior toward others (Fennell, 2002).

In order to situate our work on educational inequity, we draw from research by Mansfield and Jean-Marie (2015) and Scott's (2001) definition of systemic equity. Scott defines systemic equity as the transformed ways in which systems and individuals habitually operate to ensure that every learner – in whatever learning environment that learner is found – has the greatest opportunity to learn enhanced by the resources and supports necessary to achieve competence, excellence,

independence, responsibility, and self-sufficiency for school and for life (p. 6). Mansfield and Jean-Marie's view of educational inequity is closely tied to Scott's work and more broadly frame educational inequity within a social justice perspective to account for a larger system of schooling practices characterized by inequities that are expressed in multiple dimensions of schooling. The subsequent section focuses on these inequities and how inequities and educational access are negotiated from the perspective of socioeconomics, gender, and race.

Identities and Schooling

Historically, the prevailing presumption has been that U.S. public schools are, as purveyors of a democratic culture where the "American Dream" is within reach of all who desire it, "blind" to the race, gender, class, and religion of students who attend them (Jean-Marie & Mansfield, 2013; Tyack & Hansot, 2002). However, relatively recently, numerous researchers have argued that identity markers such as socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and gender are related to educational access and achievement (Mansfield, 2011, 2014). Individual and institutionalized forms of inequities along race/ethnicity, gender, and class dramatically continue to have an effect on educational attainment and the achievement gap (Nieto, 2004). Within schools, the reproduction of class, race, and gender relations and privilege often place students of color, whom are most often living at the intersection of multiple identity markers, at a disadvantage for learning (Jean-Marie, 2008).

In any examination of educational access, it is critical to include a discussion of students' socioeconomic status or social class. Regardless of their gender or race/ethnicity, if students live in economically divested areas (both urban and rural), they will also attend under-resourced schools, resulting in a default educational caste system (Kozol, 2005; Lee & Burkam, 2002). Moreover, poor children in high-poverty schools perform worse than similarly poor children who attend schools without a high-poverty rate. Similarly, the achievement level of non-poor children is reduced if they attend schools with higher, overall poverty. However, race and ethnicity are closely tied with socioeconomic status (Eaton, 2006). Orfield (2002) notes that, "Poverty and its consequences underlie social separation, but it is difficult to separate poverty from race and ethnicity – particularly for African-Americans and Latinos, who are strongly discriminated against in the housing market" (p. 10). Additionally, schools have historically segregated students according to race/ethnicity mostly in the form of tracking (Oakes, 2005). In fact, "the greater the representation of minority group students, the greater the utilization of separate educational tracks" (Margolin, 1994, p. 19). For example, Black and Hispanic students are disproportionately overrepresented in special education programs while in contrast, disproportionately underrepresented in gifted and advanced placement programs (Oakes, 2005).

Disproportionate representation in gifted programs is also a concern in terms of gender. For example, during the elementary school years, the numbers of boys and girls identified for gifted programs are fairly balanced. However, during the secondary school years, boys are more heavily represented (Pipher, 1994; Sadker, 1999), with the gender gap especially prominent when it comes to math and science (Sadker, 1999). While Newkirk (2002) agreed with Sadker's findings, and cautions educators from participating in a "disadvantage competition" when it comes to gender, he also reported that the gap between eighth-grade boys' and girls' writing was "over six times greater than the differences in mathematical reasoning" (p. 315). Mickelson

(2003) conjoins prior research by pointing out that the achievement and attainment patterns of male students are "bimodal" in that they are more likely, when compared to females, to be "both academic stars and school failures" (p. 373). Others agree, noting the larger proportion of boys in the highest level math and science course work as well as special education classes, accompanied by males' disproportionate decline in college attendance and graduation (Glazer, 2005).

In addition to academic segregation, students can also be constrained by the way they are disciplined by school authorities. Males are disciplined in greater numbers than females (Ferguson, 2002) and overall, males remember their school experiences much less positively than do females, recalling "painful" memories of severe "alienation" (Kindlon & Thompson, 2002). Ferguson (2002) contends that pain and alienation is exacerbated if the male student is African-American for whom school was a place to be "marginalized to the point of oblivion" (p. 585). Indeed, Blacks and Hispanics are disciplined more often and more harshly and drop out of school at disproportionately higher rates than White or Asian students (Rumberger & Rodríguez, 2002). Within the expansive body of research on schooling in the United States, students of color are consistently stigmatized as underachievers and pathologically inferior (Nieto, 2004). A growing number of scholars argue that to address inequities for diverse student populations, educational leaders must have a heightened awareness of educational inequities in a field struggling to meet the needs of all children (Bogotch, 2005; Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005).

School Leaders' Contextual Awareness of Systemic Inequities

Many researchers argue (Brooks & Jean-Marie, 2008; Jean-Marie, 2008; Mansfield, 2014; Theoharis, 2007) that the ability of the school leader to cultivate educational equity, access, and achievement in diverse contexts depended heavily on taking an explicitly activist stance while developing the school culture. Likewise, Dantley and Tillman (2009) contend that it was imperative that school leaders recognized the "multiple contexts within which education and educational leadership exist[ed]" (p. 22). Similarly, Shields (2010) purports that if school principals acknowledged students' various identities while they were developing their leadership practices, the result would be a more caring pedagogy. "When children feel they belong and find their realities reflected in the curriculum and conversations of schooling, research has demonstrated repeatedly that they are more engaged in learning and that they experience greater school success" (p. 122). As such, leaders must fully deconstruct the realities of students' lives and the ways their leadership practices may or may not reproduce marginalizing conditions.

Several scholars assert that effective school leaders who have an awareness of broad social and cultural realties of students and their schooling experiences will actively critique marginalizing behaviors and attitudes in their own leadership style and practices as well as those in their school community (Dantley & Tillman, 2009; Lyman, Ashby, & Tripses, 2005). Furthermore, democratic principles such as listening to the voices of others were practiced as well as professed. Leadership followed the path of recognition and knowledge, followed by engaging in dialog with others, in turn followed by action that promoted change (Furman, 2004). School leaders with social justice awareness are cognizant of the nested contexts of their schools and the ways in which societal norms are translated into educational, economic, and political biases. These school leaders are viewed as social justice leaders whose practices involve acknowledging

that schools do not exist in a vacuum and recognizing that schools can be sites of reproduction of, or resistance to, injustice found in the greater context (Lott & Webster, 2006).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As a framework for understanding how school leaders move beyond the rhetoric of talking about issues of inequity to challenge the status quo (Jean-Marie, Williams, & Sherman, 2009), we draw upon the work of Singleton and Linton's (2006) conceptualization of courageous conversations. Singleton and Linton's (2006) extensive work with schools in the United States is focused on race to "help educators improve the achievement of all students while narrowing the gaps between the lowest- and highest-performing groups and eliminating the predictability and disproportionality of which racial groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories" (p. 27). While they focused on race, we believe this framework can be utilized to more broadly consider discussions on educational inequities as they relate to identity intersectionalities discussed above. The concept, courageous conversations, is premised on three factors for school systems to close the achievement gap and address educational inequities: passion, practice, and persistence. One is hard-pressed to practice courageous conversations unless they possess and practice these three essential qualities.

Passion

Passion is defined as the level of connectedness and energy educators bring to social justice work in their commitment to district, school, and/or classroom equity transformation resistance against change and school system's resilience to maintain the status quo (i.e., tracking minority students, limited placement of minority students in gifted and advanced program, etc.). Singleton and Linton's (2006) emphasis of passion is premised on the "heart" of leadership: With passion, we engage our soul and our being in this work, along with our mind and our body … will have the strength not only to stand up for what is right but to do what it is right for them as well (p. 12). School leaders who are steeped in passion support the quest for critical approaches to change school culture and conditions that traditionally have addressed inequities on a peripheral level. School leaders' critical assessment of their experience, practices, assumptions and beliefs about race, gender, and other biases are important. From passion, school leaders engage in specific practices to address issues of inequities in schools.

Practice

At the practice level, passion energizes school leaders to take actions that address the achievement gap and tackle institutionalized inequities (Singleton & Linton, 2006). For example, school leaders draw on equity and context-specific issues directly involving their schools or indirectly through the district and use data to identify patterns of marginalization.

Skrla, Reyes, & Scheurich (2000) purport in their work on equity audits – a tool to guide schools in working toward equity and excellence (i.e., teacher quality equity, programmatic equity, and achievement equity), that school leaders will need to have access to practical tools to use in developing a more comprehensive, more insightful understanding of equitable and inequitable relationships in their current systems. Regardless of the specific approach taken, school leaders

must have a "laser-like focus" on practices that "strive to achieve the vision of an equitable school system [that] refrain from blaming underserved students for the system's failures" (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 69).

Persistence

The final strand of the courageous conversations model is persistence – the long term time and energy commitment to remain focused on equity to close the achievement gap (Singleton & Linton, 2006). Persistence orchestrates the hard work of cultural transformation in schools. Time and effort are devoted to instructional improvement and school leaders garner resources to remove barriers for teachers and staff (i.e., increase their effectiveness with students of color in the classroom). Singleton and Linton assert that persistence is staying the course in pursuit of equity because persistent educators consistently and collectively push forward with their transformation ideas (p. 211). They caution that without persistence, schools will continue to drift from one school improvement initiative to the next without developing capacity for lasting, systemic change.

GROWING LEADERS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND DEMOCRATIC SCHOOLS

Given the demographic shift of the U.S. population which is becoming increasingly more diverse, there is a need to look at practices (i.e., the types of discourse, experiences, processes, and structures) that promote the development and support of principals committed to social justice and democratic principles as espoused by Singleton and Linton (2006). The growing body of literature on educational leadership in general and the intersection of race, gender, and educational leadership in particular has much to offer the field on the veracity of barriers in educational contexts in the 21st century. The scope of literature reflects a concern for empirical research and conceptual understanding of the degree to which school leaders have to navigate in gendered and racialized organizational environments but are driven to transcend them. As examined in this chapter, many school leaders are involved in equity and social justice practices to benefit not only students who are marginalized but all learners. For aspiring leaders, critical engagement in dialogue and reflective practice about social justice and democracy can be well-informed about a greater, more robust and inclusive form of democratic schooling, and a substantively egalitarian education system.

As a secondary analysis (Corti & Thompson, 2004) of this specific finding from the original study (i.e., female leaders who exemplified a values-orientation around issues of social justice in their leadership practices), we further explored the phenomenological approach by examining the lived experiences of four of the eleven female secondary school leaders. As reiterated by Moustakas (1994, p. 13), phenomenology is "the first method of knowledge" because it "involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for reflective structural analyses that portray the essences of the experience." For the purposes of this chapter, we revisited the original data to conduct secondary analyses (Heaton, 1998) of the experiences of these four women. Various arguments in favor of developing secondary analysis of qualitative studies have been catalogued (Corti & Thompson, 2004; Heaton, 1998). For example, research contends that this approach can be used to generate new knowledge, new hypotheses, or support for existing theories; and that it allows wider use of data

from rare or inaccessible respondents (Corti & Thompson, 2004; Heaton, 1998). By revisiting the data to further analyze the professional experiences of these four female secondary principals, gave insights on how their leadership practices embraced social justice, democratic schooling, and issues of equity. They created a space for the researchers to further examine their roles as agents of social justice, morality, democracy, and school leaders (Jean-Marie & Normore, 2006).

For the purpose of this study, we draw upon qualitative secondary analysis (QSA) (Gladstone et al., 2007) to examine how school leaders are engaging school members (i.e., teachers, students, parents, and community) about educational inequities for an improved understanding to better serve the needs of all learners. QSA is defined as the use of existing data collected from prior studies to pursue a new research question or utilize alternative theoretical perspectives (Gladstone et al., 2007). While utilizing quantitative data in secondary analyses is quite common, using qualitative data similarly is an emerging phenomenon (see Barbour & Eley, 2007). Interest in the use of QSA for our current study stemmed from conversations about our previous research on women, leadership, and social justice which led to subsequent conversations about Singleton and Linton's (2006) framework. An overview of the qualitative secondary analysis of our various conceptual and empirical research studies on women and educational leadership is shared below.

Leadership Orientation: Values-Orientation and Collaboration

The descriptions of leadership orientations (i.e., types of leadership style preferred and practiced) provided by the women involved in our studies support research findings that indicate women's leadership styles tend to be collaborative and inclusive (Ah Nee-Benham, 2003). Further, women identified characteristics such as making a difference, creating change, providing direction, meeting the needs of diverse students, dedicated to nurturance and care, and working with people internally and externally to build and cultivate open and trusting relationships (Burns, 2001; Hall, 1994; Wheatley, 2002).

All of the women felt quite fulfilled in their roles as secondary principals. These women leaders felt that they were able to create and articulate a clear vision, were inspirational models and set high performance, and were able to assume responsibilities. Substantiating other research (Lyman et al., 2005; Young & Skrla, 2003), these women believed their role as teachers and leaders were of equal importance. They were committed to making an impact on the educational system by capitalizing on what they hoped to accomplish and how they hoped to fulfill this mission. Several principals discussed the challenges they mitigated while in the role of secondary principal. These principals had the daunting responsibility of providing effective leadership relevant to their stakeholders, while, at the same time, first learning about their schools' needs. For example, one suburban principal – the first female high school principal in that district – understood that it would take time for her to be accepted by the local community. She noted how her actions were under a microscope but expressed confidence in her abilities to work with the community. Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Groga, and Ballenger (2007) synthesis of the literature on women principals would view this principal's experience as one who faces the subtle yet distinct message that [she] should not make waves. However, this principal expressed confidence in her abilities to work as a woman with the ethnic diverse school community while simultaneously remaining culturally sensitive to the community.

Ethnically diverse school communities offer opportunities for more general understandings gained from gendered and ethnic experiences to be employed to the whole school community, together with specific knowledge about how ethnic expectations and diversity can be used to enhance communications with that group. The women appreciated the need to be accommodating of diversity and that success in these situations would require sharing leadership and communication responsibilities in multiethnic contexts.

Other principals in both urban and suburban districts acknowledged the challenges that related to school climate and students' cultures (i.e., segregation and division of students cultures); and teachers' beliefs about teaching and learning (i.e., apathy and resistance to change). Despite the challenges, these women were devoted to building trust with their staff, and creating a supportive and nurturing environment for students. They talked about developing school initiatives that would provide a new environment to change students' perceptions of themselves to make them more capable and successful in school. In support of research by Smulyan (2000) and Eckman (2002), these principals were seeking balance that worked for them and their school community, functioning within the existing norms in ways that allowed them to be themselves and effective.

Several principals articulated a sense of self-awareness and emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995) and school vision; they were willing to "think outside of the box" and take-risks to improve the outcomes for student learning. They connected and integrated their spiritual beliefs to their roles as school leaders driven by purpose – as indicated by a principal who shared her experiences and sensitivity about how she handled the suicide of one of her teachers. Whether in urban or suburban school districts, the principals sought to address the needs of the least "voiced" in their schools (i.e., students on drugs, teen pregnancy, low SES students, students who have incarcerated parents, students who live alternative lifestyles, students who are involved with juvenile justice system, and those who are sexually abused.). In support of previous research (Furman, 2003; Helterbran & Rieg, 2004; Smulyan, 2000), these principals involved faculty in decision-making and were sensitive to school needs and expectations by seeking to involve the local school and community – internally and externally – in their school initiatives.

Issues of Gender and Race Pertaining to Female Leaders

Gender and race played significant roles in the leadership experiences of these principals. Several women expressed concerns that in order to be successful as females they needed to be assertive, more male-like qualities than female-like qualities (Helterbran & Rieg, 2004). Gender has been regarded as a category of experience that influences women to develop leadership values and engage in a model of relational leadership (Clark, 2004). In support of other research (Smulyan, 2000), the women in this study synthesize the finer quality of masculinity and feminist perspective and formed a newer, stronger, and more balanced practice of leadership. These women were constantly learning their own values and limits by unconsciously assuming that gender does not matter when it is in fact present in their expectations, habits, and gender (un)consciousness and that of all with whom they deal (Murphey et al., 2005). Some of the participants believed that characteristics generally associated with females (Helterbran & Rieg, 2004) were central to their leadership practices (i.e., warmth, nurturing, sensitivity, cooperative, and accommodating).

While issues of gender permeated the discussion, of equal importance were issues of race. Much like their leadership experiences as women, there was an unconscious assumption by several of the women that race did not matter when it is in fact present in much of their discussion and race (un)consciousness resonated within their perspectives. For example, one White urban principal raised issues about being "White bred … I can run a school. … I've never been discriminated against." However, she further explained if she were Black or Hispanic, it would have increased her chances of successfully running a school. She asserted that she had never been affected by race; yet she articulated contradictions as they pertained to her experiences. In contrast to this urban principal, a suburban principal expressed similar issues that pertained to differential treatments of White females and males in school leadership. She felt that her experiences would differ if she were a White female or male. Research indicates that women of color, and to a lesser extent White women are pressured to give up their cultural identities (Banks, 1995; Mansfield & Jean-Marie, 2015). Professional women over time have come to realize that they have had to display some male-based characteristics in order to become acceptable to be selected for a leadership role such as secondary school principals. However, White and Black women may have found a collective voice. According to research (Young & Skrla, 2003), some women feel less of a need to shape their demeanor to look and sound like men. In short, interpretations pass off as objective practice promote and entrench white privilege and male dominance.

CONCLUSIONS

Our approach to the study of women within the urban and suburban contexts was initially shaped by a review of the literature from the scope of research on women in educational leadership, from gendered discussions of school leadership, and from the emerging discourse on school leadership for social justice. Themes of particular relevance for our study that emerged from a combination of the literature and empirical findings from our earlier research included the importance of a cultivating relationships, social justice, and spirituality. Permeating throughout these themes was the women's personal awareness gained through a critical assessment of experience, practices, assumptions, and beliefs. Self-knowledge and acceptance of one's own ethnicity, culture, and background are important components of personal conviction, motivation, and awareness of social justice issues, attributes of leaders desirous of creating schools where moral values, justice, respect, care, and equity are the guiding lights (Banks, 1995). References to diversity made by women in this study indicated that they believe in the acceptance and respect for differences (i.e., "salad bowl" metaphor) – that tolerance is expected, diversity is respected, and inclusiveness is celebrated.

Although the findings from this study help build a continuum of social justice beliefs and actions around negotiating gender and race in historically sexist and racist work environments we recommend further studies that investigate beliefs about the social world and justice; how these correlate with certain activities in different school contexts, and how leaders explicitly define social justice, diversity, race, and gender within the context of being a school leader. The more we study this phenomenon as "real work" the closer we get to understanding what tools are necessary to get the work done well.

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