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Sociopolitical Crisis and the Rise of a Social Justice Superintendent in Charlottesville

Sara Lourdes Epperly
Old Dominion University, sarita.epperly@gmail.com

SOCIOPOLITICAL CRISIS AND THE RISE OF A SOCIAL JUSTICE SUPERINTENDENT

IN CHARLOTTESVILLE

by

Sara Lourdes Epperly

BA, University of Virginia, 2005
MT, University of Virginia, 2008
EdS, University of Virginia, 2013

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Approved by:

_____
Jay P. Scribner (Director)

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Karen L. Sanzo (Member)

_____
John W. Baaki (Member)

ABSTRACT

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IN CHARLOTTESVILLE

Sara L. Epperly
Old Dominion University
Committee Chair: Jay P. Scribner

This qualitative case study examined one school superintendent's handling of a sociopolitical crisis event over the course of its phased unfolding. A review of literature in the fields of both crisis management and social justice educational leadership supplied a conceptual lens for viewing the case. Key concepts from the crisis management literature included staged intervention, organizational learning, and transformative leadership. Key concepts from the literature of social justice educational leadership included criticality, inclusion, relationship-building, and capacity-building. The study methodology involved the conduct of 17 interviews and collection of more than 100 related documents. Analysis of the data supported a series of findings treating the nature of crisis, the phenomenon of crisis optimization, and the classification of social justice initiatives. The findings supported the development of propositions toward a theory of crisis optimization for social justice realization. Crisis is concluded to be a recognitive event that leadership can leverage toward the realization of retributive justice. Researchers in both management and educational leadership fields will find relevance in this crossover study. There is ample opportunity for replication and extension of the study's several findings. Educational leadership practitioners will also find implications for their work, that is strategies for managing crisis and advancing social justice in their organizations. At the present time of worldwide volatility around issues of public health and race relations, this study offers a hopeful perspective on opportunity present in the convergence of crisis management and educational leadership.

This work is dedicated to the memory of Adam Ward. The dedication is further explained in the final paragraphs of the report.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

As the American public continues to diversify, so it becomes more polarized in its regard for diversity. Crises of aggression toward minoritized populations have captured the nation's current events narrative, provoking a climate of intensity and chaos. August 2019 and the outset of this study saw raids of undocumented immigrants in Mississippi, an ethnically targeted mass shooting in Texas, and the two-year anniversary of a White supremacist rally in Virginia. In this context, American public schools pursue their mission to promote the success and wellbeing of all students. How can a school leader protect and support her organization in relation to such challenges of this and every time? The question drives this study of educational leadership and its relationship to crisis.

The introductory chapter grounds the study in solid foundation. A conceptual overview engages two concepts, crisis and social justice educational leadership, which together constitute a lens for viewing select empirical phenomena. Explication of research questions clarifies the purpose of this work: to understand the relationship between social justice educational leadership and contemporary crisis management in school organizations. An accounting of related research shows need and place for this study among the scholarship of educational leadership. Ultimately this introduction outlines ensuing chapters of the report, so orients the reader for full and clear appreciation of its content.

Conceptual Overview

Understanding Crisis

A crisis is a major event, sudden and negative, with potential to harm an organization and its stakeholders (Coombs, 2012; Fearn-Banks, 1996). In the contemporary world context, crisis events are increasing in occurrence and diversity of type (Mouline, 2018; Wang & Kuo, 2017).

Not solely a business world phenomenon, leaders of many organizations find it necessary to treat crises as expected rather than exceptional events (Robert & Lajtha, 2002). The ubiquity of crisis is evident in schools. In their 2007 study, Adamson and Peacock found the vast majority of schools have experienced a crisis event of broad community impact. More specifically, school crisis is a traumatic event occurring in or outside a school but associated with it, such that the event affects all members including employees, students, and families. School crisis may also reach the community beyond the school or have ramifications for society generally, as an institution both personal and universal (Liou, 2015).

Organizations are vulnerable to crisis. Crises have potential not only to interrupt daily operations, but also to damage an organization's reputation around issues of culpability or mishandling (Coombs, 2012). Stakeholders often experience crisis as a threat to core assumptions, shaking the foundations of their institutions (Pauchant & Mitroff, 1992; Rosenthall, Boin, & Comfort, 2001). Leaders, responsible for guiding their organizations through dynamic environments, have potential to mitigate the negative effects of crisis on their organizations (Liou, 2015). Again, schools have shown repeat vulnerability to crises of all kinds (Schlafer, 2009). More, the psychological impacts of crisis on children are especially acute. Therefore, it is important that a school leader reflect on her crisis preparation efforts and the capacity of her organization to weather trauma.

Crisis Management

Scholarly research on the topic of crisis has produced a series of frameworks for understanding crisis events and opportunities for human influence over them. Linear models constitute a classic approach; they seek to assign order to a phenomenon that is at once inevitable and unpredictable. Fink's 1986 model is a seminal example. Fink divides crisis into four

consecutive stages (Bechler, 1995; Fink, 1986; Liou, 2015; Veil, 2011). First, the prodromal stage is a time when warning signals present. In the prodromal stage there is opportunity for addressing conflict conditions before they heighten, for potentially resolving a vulnerability before an organization suffers damages. Second, acute crisis, describes impactful events unfolding at speed with no potential for reversal. The third stage, chronic crisis, is a time for damage control efforts including critical reflection. The final crisis resolution stage is the chance to put organizational learning into action for the avoidance of repeat or ripple events (Fink, 1986).

Similarly, Pearson and Mitroff's (1993) review of corporate crises yielded a crisis management framework since applied in multitude empirical analyses across disciplines (Bhaduri, 2019; Hutchins & Wang, 2008). Their five-stage model splits Fink's initial stage in two: first signal detection, then prevention efforts. These initial stages are followed by damage containment, recovery, and organizational learning. Contemporary revisions to the Pearson and Mitroff framework have emphasized learning, asserting opportunity and need for organizational learning to occur at every stage of the crisis management cycle. Learning leaders, scholars contend, can survive and even benefit through crisis (Coombs, 2012; Wang, 2008; Veil, 2011). Note, these crisis management models have ascribed progressively more agency to organizations and their leadership for the prevention and containment of crisis events.

A general critique rendered against the described linear models is that they are too rigid to contain the dynamic nature of crisis (Bhaduri, 2019; Liou, 2015). For example, Adamson and Peacock's (2007) study revealed school crisis preparation tends to focus on latter stages of the crisis cycle. Schools attend to emergency response operations: the development of action plans and the conduct of safety drills. Another example, Coombs (2012) found corporations tend to

apply their energies toward post-crisis communications, even preparing responses in advance. In both cases, the organizations pass over crisis prevention opportunities. Meanwhile, reviewing seven events of the last decades, Bowers, Hall, & Strinivasan (2017) found most crises relate to systemic issues present but hidden by the prevailing organizational culture. In summary, while crisis symptoms are treatable, leaders tend away from the deep, often uncomfortable work of diagnosing and engaging the intrinsic vulnerabilities of their organizations.

Social Crisis

Understanding crisis as rooted in the nascent conditions and vulnerabilities of an organization, it is no surprise that many contemporary American crises reflect historic dynamics of race and power. Again, though they take many forms, crises universally and by definition exploit the weaknesses of affected communities (Coombs, 2012). The United States, having never fully resolved injustices of its own history, remains vulnerable to issues of social justice. Race, class, ethnicity and related disparities are powerful ideas mobilizing Americans on all sides of constantly unfolding issues. Feelings around discrimination, oppression, and identity have driven individuals toward vengeful, violent actions. Importantly, there are more hate groups than ever before in the United States, mostly White supremacist organizations. Notably, White supremacist groups sponsored the majority of extremist-related deaths in the country over the past ten years (Anti-Defamation League, 2018; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019).

Hate crimes and other sociopolitical eruptions often rise to the level of crisis. Damage and suffering occur locally, but also everywhere, as greater society mourns the universality of the predicament. Public schools are microcosms of society, fractals of their communities, influencing and influenced by the same dynamics that spark crises beyond them (Horsford, 2019; Larson & Ovando, 2001). The lessons of crisis literature, therefore, pertain and are important to

educational leaders as to leaders generally. How can a school leader prepare her organization for the inevitability of crisis involving issues of racism, classism, ethnocentrism, more? Understood that crisis in American often has issues of social justice at its core, the lens of social justice educational leadership provides focus for considering the impact of contemporary crisis on school organizations.

Here concludes the orientation to crisis as a concept, including discussion of its general nature, scholarly attempts to understand and order crisis, also description of its contemporary manifestation in American society. The concept forms one side of the relationship under investigation. An overview of social justice educational leadership suggests the second part of a conceptual framework relevant to the research questions and case. Again, this introductory chapter provides overview, while both concepts receive greater coverage and deliberation in the Chapter II literature review.

Social Justice Leadership

Scholars of educational leadership argue social justice leadership remains an emerging concept, wanting in empirical applications and prescriptive power (e.g., Brooks, Jean-Marie, Normore, & Hodgins, 2007). However, the work of these scholars reflects a common acknowledgement that the mission to improve educational outcomes for historically marginalized students drives and defines a kind of educational leader. More specifically, social justice leaders identify injustice in the context of their organizations. They make issue of what inequity or marginalization they find. These leaders formulate solutions and move their organizations forward accordingly (Dantley & Tillman, 2010; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009; Theoharis, 2007). This simple characterization rightly emphasizes the action orientation of social justice leadership. The description forgoes discussion

of many other qualities and commitments of social justice leaders, explored in the growing literature and reviewed in Chapter II (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Furman, 2012).

Social justice leadership is a new concept, emerging in juxtaposition to the needs of contemporary schools. A more nuanced understanding derives from reflection on these needs. First, as society evolves toward increasing diversity, schools need to prepare students for participation in the multicultural reality by cultivating cultural competence and appreciation (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Jean-Marie et al., 2009, NCES, 2018). Social justice leaders work as transformational public intellectuals, honoring and amplifying diverse perspectives in order to dispel fear and grow understanding (Brooks et al., 2007).

Second, as schools contain the same dynamics of polarization and distrust that plague greater society, they need to challenge and support students grappling with these positions and with one another (Lugg & Shoho, 2006; McMahon, 2007; Pew Research Center, 2016; Pinto, 2015). Social justice leaders are bridge builders. They are concerned to develop and steward positive school climate, and do so by promoting understanding between diverse community members (Brooks et al., 2007). Social justice leaders build meaningful relationships throughout their organizations (Theoharis, 2007).

Third, schools themselves are institutions with functionalist traditions, capable of exacerbating the predicament of traditionally disadvantaged groups (Brooks & Watson, 2019; Deschenes, Cuban, & Tyack, 2001; Myran & Sutherland, 2019). Schools need to turn a critical eye on their own policies and practices, to identify and then resolve problem areas (Capper, 2015). Social justice leaders are critical activists. They possess heightened awareness of oppression, exclusion, and marginalization. They attune to pretextual forces affecting current

organizational dynamics. These leaders commit to reformative dialogue and actions, even in the face of adversity including personal risk (Brooks et al, 2007; Jean-Marie et al., 2009).

The above-detailed framework - leader as critical activist, as bridge builder, as transformative public intellectual - draws from an early publication of Brooks, Jean-Marie, Normore, and Hodgins (2007). Scholars have presented other frameworks that organize constructs of social justice leadership differently. Capper and colleagues' 2006 work, for example, divides the concept into two domains, the educational and the equity. Theoharis and Brooks collaborated on another framing of the concept, emphasizing the leader's attention to historical context (2012). Application of each lens yields new insights to any investigation of social justice leadership, and empirical depth for the ongoing theoretical development of this idea.

Leadership for social justice relates to several established theories in the field. Appreciating its theoretical situation bolsters the emerging lens (Bogotch & Reyes-Guerra, 2014; Brooks & Watson, 2019; Dantley, Beachum, & McCray, 2009). As social justice leadership targets the status quo and advances change, so it reflects descriptions of transformational leadership (Bass, 1991; Burns, 1978; Cooper, 2009; Shields, 2014). For the values it places on human diversity and cultural literacy, social justice leadership allies to culturally relevant leadership theory (Ezzani & Brooks, 2019; Khalifa et al., 2016). As it assumes the prevalence of injustice, and challenges notions of liberalism, so it reflects critical race theory (Capper, 2015; Parker & Villalpando, 2007). The concept holds elements of these prominent theories, even as it takes on its own form. The connections undergird the relevance of social justice leadership as a lens for studying cases and problems in contemporary education.

Purpose

Appreciating sociopolitical volatility as intrinsic to American society including its institution of public schooling, the purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between school district leadership and crisis management. The study explores the influence of leadership on a specific sociopolitical crisis and its management through the lens of social justice leadership. In so doing, the study describes the social justice orientation of one superintendent and her impact on a school district's culture and crisis preparedness.

Research Questions

In order to understand the relationship between social justice leadership and crisis management, the following research questions guide the investigation:

1. How did the Superintendent's approach to leadership prepare the organization to handle this crisis?

2. How and to what extent did the leader maintain mission focus while supporting the organization through crisis?

3. What lessons can be drawn from this case as to school superintendents' management of sociopolitical crisis for the benefit of their organizations and stakeholders?

Chapter IV, Findings, addresses the first research questions and related themes from the data. Question 3 reflects this study's unique purpose and probes implications for practice. The final chapter, Discussion, treats this question.

Significance

This work makes significant contribution to the field on three fronts. To begin, the study produces additional empirical research on social justice educational leadership and contributes to the development of an emerging theory in the field. The concept of social justice educational

leadership is currently receiving scholarly attention, yet wants for field application (Brooks et al., 2007; Capper & Young, 2014). This empirical investigation applies the concept to a new topic, crisis management, and so contributes to social justice leadership's growing theoretical depth.

More, the study connects the field of educational leadership to the interdisciplinary topic of crisis management. The majority of scholarship attending this topic occurs in business and management fields. The topic is relevant to educational leadership because, data shows, most school organizations deal with crisis and make effort toward successful crisis management (Pearson & Mitroff, 1993). Research also shows schools tend to focus crisis management efforts on acute response and recovery, rather than prevention (Coombs, 2012; Liou, 2015). In what is regrettably an era of multitude school tragedies, a time of rising hate and the growth of extremism, this study has potential to yield transferable insights on crisis prevention for other school contexts (Cordova, 2019; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2017).

It is important that the study documents contributions of a female, African American educational leader and brings this diverse perspective to a field in need. Critical theorists in the field of educational leadership stress the paradigm of leadership has traditionally privileged White educators (Parker & Villalpando, 2007; Brooks & Watson, 2019). More, there is evidence this field has marginalized and curtailed the leadership of African American women specifically (Tillman, 2004). Recent scholarship confirms a positive correlation between racially diverse school leaders and diverse student achievement (Mansfield & Jean-Marie, 2015; Singleton, 2014; Santamaría, 2014). Further, African American school leaders have comparatively superior influence on the outcomes of African American students (Lomotey & Lowery, 2014; Tillman, 2004; Walker, 1996). This study contributes to the field because it accesses needed data explaining these phenomena.

Case Detail

Rosa Atkins, Ed.D., is superintendent of Charlottesville City Schools. Dr. Atkins joined

the organization in July, 2006. Prior to Charlottesville, Atkins served as assistant superintendent

in Caroline County, Virginia. She is a graduate of Virginia State and Virginia Polytechnic

universities. The Virginia Department of Education recognized Atkins in 2011 with its

Superintendent of the Year award. She has received additional recognition from the U.S.

Department of Education and other institutions. Atkins served as president of the Virginia

Association of School Superintendents in 2015. In 2018 she served as president of the Urban

Superintendents Association of America. Under her leadership, the graduation rate in

Charlottesville rose more than 10% in ten years, and more than 20% for African American

students (Mandell, 2018), among numerous other accomplishments.

Charlottesville City Schools is a small urban district in central Virginia. The district

serves 4,500 students across nine schools. The student population is economically, ethnically,

and racially diverse. White students constitute 41% of the student body, African American and

biracial students another 40%. More than half of students (55%) are eligible to receive free or

reduced price meals. Charlottesville spends more than $17,000 per pupil annually, in

comparison to the $12,556 state average. The school district is known for its strength of

engineering, fine arts, and Advanced Placement offerings. In 2018, the district's graduation rate

reached 93% (Virginia Department of Education, 2019).

On Friday and Saturday, August 11-12th, 2017, approximately 1,000 White supremacist

protesters rallied in Charlottesville, Virginia. Participants protested a campaign to remove the

statue of Confederate general Robert E. Lee from a city park. Specifically, a Charlottesville

High School student wrote, circulated, and submitted a petition that brought the issue of statue

removal for local government consideration (Dillard, 2018). Protesters carrying racist

symbology and lit torches violently engaged with counterprotesters over a two day

demonstration, injuring 35 individuals. One protester drove his car into a crowd, killing a

counterprotester (Astor, Caron, & Victor, 2017). The event drew national attention and stoked

debate. Charlottesville teachers commenced their new school year on Monday, August 14th.

The city's diverse student population returned to school the following week.

      School crisis is a traumatic event in or outside the organization that impacts the entire

school community (Brock, Sandoval, & Lewis, 2001; Kruse & Louis, 2009; Liou, 2015). The

August 2017 White supremacist rally exposed the Charlottesville community to graphic, large

scale demonstrations of hate for minority race people. The exposure included multiple examples

of racially-motivated violence and victimizations. The community witnessed civil disobedience

and the failure of law and order to protect its membership (Thompson, 2018; Winston, 2018).

More, the community found itself at the center of a controversy attended by advocates on all

sides of the sociopolitical spectrum. The children of this community returned to school with

questions and insecurities, as employees wrestled their own disappointments and misgivings.

For the organization charged to protect and grow the children of Charlottesville, this event

constituted crisis. And though on its surface this seemed a non-causality crisis, the public has

since perceived a relationship between the August, 2017 events and Charlottesville's particular

historical context (Fortunato, 2018; Brown, 2018). The community embodies the Jeffersonian

dilemma of slavery versus freedom, of establishment versus progressivism, that too often has

defaulted to discrimination and disparity for African Americans. "I don't think the hate groups

selected our community by chance," Superintendent Atkins reflected in an interview with the

New York Times in the months following (Green & Waldman, 2018).

Report Preview

The relationship between social justice educational leadership and school crisis response is here explored through the case of one superintendent's leadership before, during, and following a crisis of violent racism in the community. The study unfolds over five chapters. Organization of the Chapter II literature review echoes the format of this introduction. For each core concept, crisis and social justice leadership, the review begins with definitions and a description of existing frameworks. The review then moves through empirical research and contemporary connections in each topic area, and offers synthesis of the total content. Explanation of study design and methods occurs in Chapter III. Chapter IV offers a detailed presentation of findings. Discussion of findings and their transferability takes place in Chapter V. References and appendices follow.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is the discovery and characterization of a relationship between two discrete concepts, each with implications for the field of education. These concepts, simply put, are crisis and social justice school leadership. Requisite to the study, then, is full and clear understanding of each. This literature review explores each topic in turn. Synthesis of the scholarly offerings yields core and common constructs which constitute a frame for new study.

In preview, this chapter addresses first the interdisciplinary concept of crisis. Scholarship includes crisis management schema and related critiques. Scholars' elevation of organizational learning justifies in-depth coverage of this aspect of crisis management. Another section covers characterizations of crisis leadership. The review then turns to what is known of school crisis specifically. This section closes with a summary of demographic realities contributing to the rise of crisis in society generally, including in schools.

The review then shifts to the concept of social justice educational leadership. Scholarship on the overall impact of educational leaders provides entry to the discussion. Next the review treats the evolution of social justice as a concept both dynamic and enduring. Conceptual work on social justice educational leadership includes scholars' several efforts to engineer a new lens. The results of limited empirical research have place at this point in the review. Next, outline of related, established theories situates the emerging frame in a steady theoretical context. Contemporary connections return the reader to concrete and pressing demands of schools today. To conclude, a brief review summarizes coalescence across the different fields, crisis and social justice educational leadership, clarifying a conceptual frame built from the intersection of these greater concepts.

Crisis

From natural disasters to terrorist attacks, corporate scandals to product defects, crises are many things (Bhaduri, 2019; Bowers et al., 2017; Pearson & Mitroff, 1993; Wang, 2008). With the increasing complexity of human life, there is scholarly agreement that crises are growing in frequency, diversity, and scale (Lalonde, 2007; Mitroff, 2002; Mouline, 2018; Perrow, 1984; Wang & Kuo, 2017). Defining the term supports understanding of this important classification, and highlights subtleties discerned through decades of scholarship.

To begin, Pearson and Clair (1998) in their seminal work broadly defined crisis as a low-probability, high impact situation posing threat to an organization's viability. That is, crisis is a generally unexpected event affecting an organization or community and potentially damaging toward it. From their meta-analysis of twenty years of crisis scholarship, Bundy, Pfarrer, Short, and Coombs (2017) explained crisis similarly, according to three characteristics. First, crisis is a source of disruption and change. Second, crisis is threatening and often harmful to an organization. Third, notably, these scholars classified crisis as a behavioral phenomena. They found human actors, not environmental factors, ultimately responsible for these highly damaging scenarios. Scholars of school crisis Cornell and Sheras (1998) suggest an additional perspective. Crises are causally situated, they found, so better understood as a process rather than an isolated occurrence. Taken together, the definitions support a thorough appreciation of the concept.

Beyond scholarship, people recognize crisis by the great scale of its impact, both deep and broad. The impact of crisis may be financial devastation, loss of reputation, or loss of human life (Coombs, 2012; Lalonde, 2007; Mitroff, 1988). Victims experience emotional, cognitive, and behavioral strain in an event's wake. Long-term psychological impacts of violent crises are common, occurring in community members only indirectly or tangentially associated.

They include confusion and demoralization, alienation and anger, post-traumatic stress and depression. In children, these psychological effects of crisis are particularly acute (Barnett & Pratt, 2000; Cohen, 1995; Cornell & Sheras, 1998).

In contrast, research has also found the potential for positive results from crisis. Effectively managed, crises can yield outcomes such as adaptation, renewal, coherence, and longevity for an organization (Barnett & Pratt, 2000; Coombs, 2012; Liou, 2015; Mitroff, 2005). Few organizations, however, have so adequately prepared for crisis as to come out ahead (Lockwood, 2005; Bowers et al., 2017). The literature of crisis includes theoretical and practical insights on successful crisis management.

Crisis Management

Much scholarship treating crisis orients toward a goal of crisis management. Crisis management is leadership's work to reduce the likelihood of, minimize harm from, and reestablish order following crisis (Bundy et al., 2017; Pearson & Clair, 1998). Scholars, seeking order in realms of chaos, have studied multitude crisis events post-hoc in effort to develop crisis management frameworks. These frameworks are empirically derived metacognitive tools. The first regarded framework is more crisis model than management model, and ascribes minimal agency to managers. Subsequent revisions have increasingly opened the concept of crisis management to the influence of leadership and organizational learning.

As described in the introductory chapter, Fink's (1986) early model sets up an analogy between crisis and medical illness. Stage 1 he called prodromal, a time when initial symptoms present. Stage 2 is acute crisis, rapid escalation of the problem and immediate harm done. Stage 3, chronic crisis, is a long-term period of treatment and healing. Stage 4, resolution, involves

moving on from crisis and carrying forth the lessons of experience. This linear presentation ascribes a definite start and end to the crisis experience.

Pearson and Mitroff's 1993 empirical work with *Fortune 500* organizations led to the development of a five stage crisis management model still promoted and applied by these and other scholars (Bhaduri, 2019; Hutchins & Wang, 2008; Mitroff, 2005). As noted in the introductory chapter, Pearson and Mitroff's work emphasizes proactive crisis management. They divided Fink's prodromal stage in two. The initial stage they called signal detection. Signal detection is an organization's baseline, when small but significant indicators of crisis are present in the regular organizational setting. According to Pearson and Mitroff (1993), constant probing and scrutiny of all aspects of the organization are fundamental to effective crisis management. To identify vulnerabilities before they emerge in full is the requisite strategy for prevention. The second stage of their model, then, is preparation and prevention. Pearson and Mitroff encouraged rehabilitating identified weaknesses while simultaneously training for emergency response. While leadership may succeed at averting some crises, others will break through. Effective leadership, then, should follow through beyond signal detection to prevention and preparedness efforts. Crisis teams, plans, and simulation exercises fit into this stage of a management model. The third phase of the Pearson and Mitroff model, damage containment, involves carrying out established plans in order to limit the reach of unfolding crisis. Stage four, recovery, implies both the short-term return to operations and a long-term goal of new normalcy. Learning is the last stage of this management model, and involves a hotwash of the crisis in its aftermath. The objective of this structured organizational learning occasion is not to place blame, but only to acknowledge strengths and opportunities for improvement in both the

organization's general operating and in the crisis handling itself. Notably this model is cyclical, not finite.

Seeking greater simplicity and prescriptive power, Coombs re-envisioned the prevailing literature with his 1999 publishing of an additional schema. Coombs' projection shares many characteristics of both the Fink and the Pearson and Mitroff frameworks, subsuming them into a new format. His framework involves three macro-categories: pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis. Coombs then subdivides each into micro-categories with strategies for managers to perform at each stage.

Table 1 Comparison of Staged Approaches to Crisis Management (Coombs, 2012)

Fink	Mitroff	Three-Stage
Prodromal	Signal Detection	Pre-crisis
	Probing and Prevention	
Acute Crisis	Damage Containment	Crisis
Chronic	Recovery	
Resolution	Learning	Post-crisis

Described here are three influential models of crisis management. Scholars, including the originators, have submitted multitude revisions (Bundy et al., 2016; Liou, 2015; Mitroff, 2005; Wang, 2008). These revisions have most often critiqued the early models for their linear and sequential nature, insisting the dynamic nature of crisis cannot be captured on a timeline. They

emphasize organizations' need for flexibility in the realm of response. More, learning should not be relegated to the last phase of crisis management but actively practiced throughout (Lagadec, 1997; MacNeil & Topping, 2007; Robert & Lajtha, 2002; Veil, 2007). Exploration of organizational learning and its relationship to crisis management, then, follows.

Crisis and Organizational Learning

Research has established the potential for crisis prevention as well as the potential for positive crisis outcomes (Barnett & Pratt, 2000; Coombs, 2012; Mitroff, 2005). However, organizations rarely manage crisis with this level of success. Weiner (2006) and others have found a majority of organizations fail to identify early signs of crisis in spite of their manifestation (Bowers et al., 2017; Lagadec, 1997; Liou, 2015). Though clues in the environment provide opportunity for preemptive conflict resolution, they often get overlooked. In the crisis aftermath organizations prefer to focus on communications and public relations, rather than engaging the root problems themselves (Bowers et al., 2017; Coombs, 2012; Wooten & James, 2008). Organizations exhibit hindsight bias, making perfunctory and wrongful causal attributions (Weick & Ashford, 2001). Again, though there is opportunity for growth and improvement through crisis management, requisite learning seldom takes place (Roux-Dufort, 2000; Wang, 2008).

According to contemporary crisis management scholarship, the difference between success and failure hinges on organizational learning (Wang, 2008; Veil, 2011). Organizational learning is the process of individual stakeholders and the collective gaining knowledge from the past to deal with the present, especially to correct present shortcomings (Larsson, 2010). Understood differently, learning occurs when an organization turns to critically examine itself and its context (Argyris & Schon, 1996). Organizations that detect warning signals can succeed

at crisis management by leveraging these revelations for change (Coombs, 2012; Veil, 2011). Organizations that experience crisis too can thrive, though learning from mistakes requires careful deliberation. Thus appreciating the importance of organizational learning to crisis management, what follows is an exploration of factors both obstructing and promoting it.

The literature provides numerous accounts of barriers to crisis learning (Bundy et al, 2017; Frandsen & Johansen, 2017; Lagadec, 1997; Veil, 2011). According to Veil (2011), a fundamental barrier is the inherent difficulty of seeing beyond one's own experience. A history of success, especially, blinds in this way (Perrow, 1999; Tompkins, 2005). Another deterrent is trained mindlessness, that is members' eagerness to conform with established organizational norms. A natural pull to fit in with an existing culture fosters members' disregard for contextual factors and perspectives anomalous to it (Langer, 1989). Bundy et al. (2017) similarly list rigidity of core beliefs, centrality of expertise, and disregard of outsider perspectives as obstructive. These rhetorical barriers to learning obscure evidence of imminent crisis (Veil, 2011).

Highly reliable and well-trained organizations often find themselves caught unaware by crisis, again because the origins of crisis lie outside cultural boundaries (Bechler, 1995; Wang, 2008). Lagadec (1997) found crises originate in the places an organization is unwilling to explore. Crisis emerges from taboos, from antagonisms between members, from challenge to authority, from the mis-match between world visions and actual dynamics (Bechler, 1995). An organization prepares for crisis, then, not by practicing to meet an objective foe. Rather, an organization prepares for crisis by jumping toward its own political weakness. It is a move too risky for most leaders (Bhaduri, 2018). Neither they nor their organizations may possess sufficient political capital to weather the denial, exclusion, avoidance or other fallout from such

exploration. Most leaders, in their risk analysis, find intentional disruption to the stability of their organization unthinkable before or even after a storm (Lalonde, 2007; Wooten & James, 2008).

Scholarship has produced guidance for practitioners interested in pursuing organizational learning for better crisis management. First, establishing task forces for critical review of an organization formally opens that organization to negative feedback and related opportunities for improvement. Task forces should include internal and external membership for triangulation of feedback (Lagadec, 1997; Lalonde, 2007; Robert & Lajtha, 2002). Second, organizations should pursue double-loop learning. They should seek not only to resolve problems, but to understand and treat the causal conditions that gave rise to them (Argyris, 1982; Frandsen & Johansen, 2017). Third, organizations should take ownership of, become experts in, any past crises in their own history. They should study other crises first across their industry, and then even beyond it (Coombs, 2012; Larsson, 2010). Such formal and proactive effort toward criticality is different from emergency response, and is key to crisis abatement.

Crisis and Leadership

The above body of scholarship reveals leaders' need to engage in ongoing crisis prevention and preparedness. Again, research shows leaders tend toward passivity (Wooten & James, 2008). For example, educational leaders routinely overlook opportunities to treat root causes of major school disruptions before they escalate. The result is often violence involving students, the decline of school culture, and the related decline in student learning outcomes (Conoley, Hindmand, Jacobs, & Gagnon, 1997). More, studies show leaders' lack of crisis preparedness leaves them vulnerable to emotional and irrational decision-making during the acute crisis stage (Franklin, 2002). Given their propensity to mitigate the human cost of crisis,

concerted effort in this realm is the ethical responsibility of leadership. For the risk to children

given to their care, crisis management is an especially important aspect of school leadership

(Cornell & Sheras, 1998; Doscher & Normore, 2008). What follows is description of

characteristics and classifications of effective crisis leadership.

Research suggests some leadership competencies suit specific stages of the crisis cycle.

Perspective-taking and sense-making are skills of pre-crisis leadership. These skills support

organizational learning and are helpful for signal detection (Wooten & James, 2008; Weick &

Sutcliffe, 2011). Persuasion and creativity are also useful during pre-crisis, for mobilizing an

organization toward preventative measures (Wooten & James, 2008; Dutton et al., 1997).

During acute crisis, decision-making and communication skills are most important. Effective

leaders make objective, non-emotional determinations and communicate to stakeholders with

regularity and authenticity (Brockner & James, 2008; Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). Post-crisis

recovery requires integrity and perseverance; the leader embodies and symbolizes group

aspirations (James & Wooten, 2006; Simons, 2002). Finally, emotional intelligence including

empathy, teamwork, and relationship management are skills successful leaders display across all

stages of the crisis cycle (Bhaduri, 2018; Lockwood, 2005).

Beyond management, leaders who have capitalized on crisis are those who display a

learning orientation (Brockner & James, 2008; Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2011; Wooten &

James, 2008). Exceptionally successful crisis leaders turn toward organizational learning

strategies in spite of the short-term social or political costs of this work. These leaders make

deliberate effort to obtain and understand diverse perspectives on their organization.

Accordingly, these leaders cultivate strong relationships with stakeholders of diverse

backgrounds. These leaders emphasize the importance of contextual factors to their

organization, that is the influence of history and of environment. The most successful crisis leaders promote open communication across hierarchy and formality. They push to make divergent thinking an organizational norm. Confirming the scholarship on crisis and organizational learning, the scholarship treating crisis leadership highlights the importance of leaders' open-mindedness, critical reflection, and strategic thinking for victory over vulnerability (James & Wooten, 2005; Mitroff, 2005; Robert & Lajtha, 2002).

Research pursuing a relationship between crisis management and leadership style found organizations need fitting leaders in order to emerge successfully from crisis (Bowers et al., 2017). Taking under review directive, cognitive, transactional, and transformational leadership theories, Bowers and colleagues (2017) analyzed a selection of cross-industry cases and found transformational leadership universally effective for guiding organizations across crisis types. Bowers et al. (2017) described the transformational leader as self-assured, adaptive, and logical. Again, long-term outlook, interest in root-cause analysis, and pursuit of diverse perspectives are activities attributed to this leadership style. A noted limitation of transformational leadership for crisis is the challenge of building consensus under the pressed timeline of acute crisis unfolding. Still, the reasoned and compelling vision of a transformational leader helps an organization absorb the complexity and uncertainty of crisis, that is to assert itself even in the midst of a changing context (Duke, 1987; Williams, Woods, Hertelendy, & Kloepfer, 2017).

That transformational leadership yields effective crisis management also appears in the work of Doscher and Normore (2008). The scholars applied Starratt's (2005) moral responsibility framework to the subject of educational leadership during times of national crisis. The purpose of this work was to identify behaviors of moral leadership through examples of educational leaders' treatment of crisis scenarios. Doscher and Normore (2008) found the most

effective crisis leaders demonstrated characteristics of transformational leadership. Specifically, for their store of effortfully garnered stakeholder respect, the transformational leader is able to break free of otherwise debilitating political constraints during times of crisis. In other words, quality relationships and a reputation for consistent work ethic safeguard a leader as she takes sensitive action. According to Doscher and Normore (2008), political neutrality is the realm in which most professionals including educators prefer to operate. However, school environments need and students deserve more support in dealing with conflict and trauma. Reflecting the work of Staratt (2005), also Dantley and Tillman (2010), Doscher and Normore (2008) affirmed a need for transformational educational leaders who support school communities through ubiquitous crisis of the contemporary age by striving for organizational learning and social change.

To summarize, scholarship treating crisis and leadership elevates learning orientation and change orientation as characteristics of effective crisis leaders. Emotional intelligence and other skills support management across the different stages of the crisis cycle. This review now narrows to the specific topic of school crisis. Reviewed research reflects the significance and prevalence of school crisis, also patterns in school leaders' crisis management strategies.

School Crisis

Schools experience crisis almost universally (Adamson & Peacock, 2007). Still, empirical research on crisis occurs mainly in the fields of management and communications, and treats education only lightly (MacNeil & Topping, 2007; Liou, 2015; Veil, 2011). To begin, school crisis is a traumatic event associated with a school, whether occurring in or outside it, with potential to impact the entire school community (Brock, Sandoval, & Lewis, 2001; Kruse & Louis, 2009; Liou, 2015). Notable in the school crisis literature is evidence of the disproportionate impact of crisis on children, especially psychologically. Multitude studies have

documented negative effects of crisis on students' long-term health and daily functioning. Post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression, fear, anger, and academic decline are regular outcomes of crisis on students (Cowan & Rossen, 2013; Cohen, 1990; Crepeau-Hobson, 2018).

Acknowledging increased volatility in society and its schools, 21st century educational leaders have moved toward crisis management. Conventional school crisis management emphasizes the development and rehearsal of emergency response plans (Brock et al., 2001; Cornell & Sheras, 1998; Adamson & Peacock, 2007). Surveys have consistently shown more than 90% of schools possess crisis plans (Adamson & Peacock, 2007; MacNeil & Topper, 2007). These plans typically contain instruction for a variety of scenarios, including fights, shootings, hostage-taking, and natural disasters. School communities practice their prescribed crisis response activities, most commonly through evacuation and lock-down drills. Empirical research confirms a positive impact of such preparation on school organizations in the event of actual crisis (Pitcher & Poland, 1992).

Schools employ several other crisis management strategies in common. More than 90% of schools have created crisis teams (Adamson & Peacock, 2007). With respect to school crisis teams, scholarship has provided some recommendations. One finding is the importance of defining the level of organization of the team, whether school or district, as well as advantages to maintaining teams at both levels (Brock et al., 2001). Adamson & Peacock (2007) saw benefit to including a diverse stakeholders on crisis teams, including mental health workers such as school psychologists, as well as parental and greater community representatives. Also, in dealing with crisis, Adamson & Peacock (2007) found most schools do employ the strategies of offering emotional supports, issuing regular communications, and conducting administrative debriefings. Then in comparison to the Pearson and Mitroff model, for example, American public schools

have embraced crisis management in terms of preparedness and damage containment. They have focused less on preemptive efforts such as signal detection and mitigation.

It follows that scholarly critique of school crisis management targets these weaker fronts. A first critique reiterates the dynamic and unknown nature of crisis events. Liou (2015) lifted the unlikelihood that any given crisis event would fit pre-established emergency plans. Rote planning and rehearsal can paralyze an organization at a time when flexibility is advantageous, Liou (2015) found. Second, scholars have argued the depth of school crisis preparedness remains reactionary. Assuming all crises are to some extent socially constructed, then especially in the condensed society that is school there is opportunity for educational leadership to invoke root-cause analysis and related efforts to suppress escalating conflict. Educational leaders, like all organizational leadership, should engage in critical learning at every stage including the pre-crisis context (Bhaduri, 2018; Cornell & Sheras, 1998; Lalonde, 2007; Liou, 2015; Veil, 2011). Virginia's effort to codify school threat assessment procedures, led by education scholar Cornell, is an example of institutional movement in this direction ("Threat Assessment," n.d., "Virginia Student," 2019). In summary, schools may be adequately prepared to respond to tragedy, but school leaders should do more toward preventing crisis altogether.

Contemporary Social Crisis

Research points to a rise in sociopolitical crisis in the United States, related to growing complexity across domains. In 2019 the Office of the Director of National Intelligence reported trust in leadership low, wages stagnant, and income inequality on the rise. These significant issues emerge secondary to that of demographic change throughout the country in recent decades. The country's population has continued to grow and diversify with respect to race and ethnicity (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Where in 2000, White students

constituted 61% of the public school population, that percentage had dropped to 49% in 2015 and is projected at 45% by 2027. In that same time the United States' Latino population will have doubled, reaching 29%. The African American population sustains near 15%. Importantly, the American public remains segregated even with this diversification overall. For example, a majority of White students attend schools with White majorities of more than 75%. The same statistic is true for African American students. American students tend to live with, attend school with, and commune with peers of their same race (NCES, 2018). That is, increasingly diverse people project increasingly divergent values, eliciting division and conflict.

That division transcends society is most evident in the country's political profile. In both 2014 and 2016 the Pew Research Center found the American populace more politically divided than in previous decades. That is individuals possess more extreme views of policy and there are fewer areas of agreement across party lines. More, the Pew survey found animosity in that partisanship. Half of both Democrats and Republicans expressed feelings of fear and anger toward members of the other party (2016). The value of diversity, broadly, is one point on which individuals at either extreme disagree.

Accordingly, hate activity appears increasing. The number of hate groups in the United States reached a record high in 2019 following three years of growth (Anti-Defamation League, 2018; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2019). These non-governmental organizations found White supremacy constitutes the majority and fastest growing faction among hate groups. The number of hate crimes has likewise risen since 2002, according to analysis of police reporting (Fetzer & Pezzella, 2019; Wilson, 2014). Hate crimes are more often violent than other criminal activity. Specifically, police classify hate victimizations as "serious, violent crime" more often than other victimizations, at 27% versus 8% (Pezzella & Fetzer, 2017). Given this prevalence and severity

of social bias generally, it is important but not surprising that racism endures in American schools (Horsford, Grosland, & Gunn, 2011; Orfield, 2014; Truong, 2019). Again in summary, research suggests new levels of diversity, division, tension, and even violence characterize contemporary American society. These forces contribute to the complexity that fosters crisis and renders crisis management a concern for school leaders.

Crisis Overview

The above review of crisis literature began with defining the concept. An introduction to crisis management included description of multiple frameworks and related critiques. A discussion of organizational learning established its centrality to preventing or surmounting crisis events. Literature on crisis leadership underscored leaders' need to engage their organizations in critical self-reflection and related change. A review of crisis in the education literature showed ample school effort toward emergency response, less toward prevention. Meanwhile, exploration of social phenomena depicted rising tension in greater society and in schools. As Perrow (1984) found more than three decades prior, the society is complex and tightly coupled so contains catastrophic potential. Still, leaders can cultivate organizational capacity not only to sustain but also to grow in this context.

To note, even from within the field, researchers criticize crisis management scholarship as lacking theoretical and empirical rigor (Bundy et al, 2017; Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). For the unforeseen nature of crisis, most scholarship investigates incidents after the fact. Researchers derive data from such limited sources as case study, retrospect, and anecdote. New efforts to aggregate crisis scholarship across disciplines increase the power of the collective body of work (Bundy et al, 2017; Jaques, 2009; Shrivastava, 1993). As investigations of crisis in education

remain few, this study in the field of educational leadership contributes to the interdisciplinary movement.

Social Justice Educational Leadership

The review of crisis literature establishes the social nature of crisis. On the one hand, social dynamics like disparity, division, and discrimination are the seeds of many crises. On the other hand, the strength of traditional power structures precludes signal detection and crisis prevention. Still, social actors maintain much autonomy over crisis events until the moment of their acute unfolding. As crisis is part of the landscape of schooling, so schools need leadership not only competent with latter stages of crisis management but also capable of proactively identifying social fault lines. An exploration of social justice leadership suggests there is advantage in school leadership that understands the social vulnerability of the organization, communicates it effectively, and moves to rehabilitate.

Educational Leadership

Synthesis of social justice educational leadership begins with an overview of the impact of educational leaders on student outcomes, establishing the importance of school leadership generally. Scholars in the field of educational leadership have established an indirect but substantial effect of school leadership on student learning (Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011). Specifically, leadership accounts for one-fourth of the school effect on student outcomes (Waters & Marzano, 2006). Leaders rank second only to teachers as the school factor most influencing student success (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). These effects imply responsibility beyond managerial oversight. More than balls, beans, and buses, contemporary school administrators facilitate instructional programs. They influence through the hiring of high-quality faculty. They support through the creation of physically and emotionally safe

learning environments (Fuller & Hollingworth, 2014). Multitude studies have found the following critical contributions of school leadership. First, school leaders set direction. That is, leaders communicate a comprehensible, agreeable, and compelling purpose for the organization. They monitor progress toward the shared objective across different levels of the organization. Second, leaders develop people. They build the capacity of the organization by delivering individualized support, learning opportunities, and modeling to member educators. Third, leaders design organizational structures to facilitate the work, revising policies and processes for alignment with the greater agenda (Hallinger & Heck, 1999; Leithwood et al., 2004). And while the majority of research supporting these claims treats building-level leaders, limited scholarship on superintendent leadership suggests it too matters (Waters & Marzano, 2006). District leaders influence through these same strategies (Leithwood et al., 2004). Aspects of superintendent leadership that correlate positively with student achievement include goal setting, progress monitoring, stakeholder coordination, and resource alignment across the organization (Waters & Marzano, 2006).

A primary finding of the above scholarship, effective leadership sets and pursues direction. The finding reflects the transformational leadership style articulated by Burns (1978) and Bass (1997). Burns described transformational leaders as driven by deep and motivational values. Through their strength of vision, their skill at communication, and their care with relationships, transformational leaders persuade stakeholders to personally adopt the values of the organization. Then with organizational buy-in, the transformational leader is able to consolidate change. This leadership style has proven effective across diverse organizational contexts including educational (Bowers et al., 2017; Dantley & Tillman, 2010; García-Morales, Jiménez-Barrionuevo, & Gutiérrez-Gutiérrez, 2012).

While Leithwood and other scholars of educational leadership agree with the effectiveness of transformational leadership, they do not go so far as to ascribe direction to the transformation (Geijsel, Sleegers, Leithwood, & Jantzi, 2003). Social justice is a conceptual lens that assigns direction to school leadership efforts. Through social justice educational leadership, social justice beliefs and practices integrate with traditional school leadership approaches (Bogotch, 2002). An understanding of social justice educational leadership, then, requires clarity around the underlying construct. What is social justice?

Social Justice

Social justice is an epic concept, having drawn the attention of philosophers over centuries. Such thinkers as Plato, Aquinas, Kant, Mill, and Greene have engaged in interpretation. Their interpretations differ, which poses obstacle to empirical pursuit (Bernal, 2002). Conservative thinkers have associated social justice with universal freedom from government infringement, that is, equal opportunity for self-determination (Novak, 2000). A more leftist perspective relates social justice with wealth and resource distribution, and a society's responsibility to support disparate human needs accordingly (Habermas, 1979). Education scholars have often thought of social justice in terms of critical pedagogy, the opportunity to raise students' consciousness to conditions and legacies of oppression (Freire, 1970; Greene, 1998). Most all consider social justice a moral philosophy, relating the way humans ought to treat one another. One strategy for engaging that morality is Kant's imperative that individuals project a universal application of laws and conditions (Zajda, Majhanovich, & Rust, 2006).

A basic, shared conception of social justice is the work of solving societal inequities and indignities (Dantley & Tillman, 2010). Still this assumption begs the question of who will do the

work. The literature debates this point, too. A more traditional and functionalist platform calls on the establishment to lift marginalized populations out of their circumstance and into the mainstream (Theoharis, 2007; Myran & Sutherland, 2019). A postmodern conception of social justice suggests disenfranchised people must construct their own solutions to the drawbacks of their position. What is needed from the establishment is just rhetorical space to do so (Bernal, 2002; McConkey, 2004; Murris, 2013). Again, claims to social justice support a variety of positions.

As education evolves from scientific management and behaviorism toward personalization and constructivist learning, scholars of educational leadership have adopted a contemporary and functional notion of social justice. Their emerging theory of educational leadership associates social justice with equitable life opportunities, critical examination of group disparities, and cross-cultural respect and appreciation (Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Dantley & Tillman, 2010). Dantley, Beachum, & McCray (2008) cited Young (1990), whose explanation of social justice at once challenged simplistic interpretations such as the neoliberal appeal to colorblindness (Horsford, 2019; Perez & Salter, 2019). Young called the melting away of group differences both unrealistic and undesirable. Instead, "Attending to group-specific needs and providing for group representation both promotes social equality and provides the recognition that undermines cultural imperialism" (Young, 1991, p. 191).

Similarly, Gale's (2000) historical synthesis of social justice scholarship found the concept conceived three ways, as distributive, retributive, and recognitive. Distributively, social justice values the equitable distribution of a society's material and social goods. Retributively, social justice seeks fairness of opportunity to compete for those goods. Recognitively, social justice includes the recognition and participation of different groups in mainstream spaces

(Furman, 2012; Gewirtz and Cribb, 2002). Together, the categories fit the application of social justice in the scholarship of educational leadership to-date. This attempt to define an underlying concept supports establishment of a lens for viewing educational leadership, and makes possible the identification of constructs in an emerging theory.

Educational Leadership for Social Justice

Social justice is an emergent topic in the field of educational leadership at present, but that has not been the case traditionally. Even a generation ago, scholars gave limited consideration to relationships between ethnicity, race, culture, language, gender, and student outcomes (Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Santamaría, 2014). However, since the turn of the century, difference and disparity have piqued the interest of education stakeholders generally. The topic continues to gain momentum in the academy. Factors driving this paradigm shift include the increasing diversity of the public school population. More, the passing of the No Child Left Behind Act (2002) formalized an era of accountability that laid bare achievement gaps across diverse student groups. Achievement data illuminated a long-perceived mismatch between minority students and mainstream schools (Deschenes et al., 2001; Myran & Southerland, 2019).

Scholarly investigation into the disparity has since produced multitude evidence of deficit thinking, discrimination, and resource inequity in schools (Brooks & Watson, 2019; Brown, 2004; Horsford, 2019). Theoharis (2007) found segregative structures, de-professionalized teaching staffs, unwelcoming climates, and low achievement expectations as school-level factors negatively impacting low-income students and students of color. Equity auditing has confirmed disadvantage across teacher quality indicators, program representation, and academic achievement markers for historically marginalized groups (Darling-Hammond, 2002; Scanlan, 2012; Skrla, Scheurich, Garcia, & Nolly, 2004). To make explicit just one category of struggle,

multitude statistics demonstrate African American male students' disconnect with school, for example the overrepresentation of African American males in special education, discipline referrals, school drop-out rates, and incarceration rates (Horsford, 2010). Legal scholars have agreed *Brown v. Board*'s (1954) de facto result has more to do with the absence of formal barriers to integrated schooling, less to do with the equitable distribution of resources to all student groups (Guinier, 2004). Altogether, the preponderance of evidence of disparity involving school-age children makes it difficult for society to ignore the persistence of injustice in this institution.

Still, while many in the field of education have come to understand schools as institutional agents of injustice, they simultaneously perceive the unique opportunity to transform society through schooling. These are leaders who perceive themselves as architects and engineers of a new, morally superior social order (Jean-Marie et al., 2009). These leaders choose not to focus on the minority student as the problem, rather to focus on structures and services for meeting diverse student needs (Reed & Swaminathan, 2016). A growing collection of scholarly work seeks to capture and prescribe the tenants of such leadership. This work constitutes the emerging field of educational leadership for social justice.

Social justice educational leadership takes what is known about effective school leadership generally and incorporates social justice objectives. Specifically, effective school leaders establish vision and cultivate stakeholder buy-in. Educational leaders for social justice set as their vision the elimination of social marginalization in schools (Theoharis, 2007). More, effective school leaders develop the capacity of their human resources. Educational leaders for social justice reverse teachers' deficit thinking toward diverse students and encourage culturally relevant pedagogy (Khalifa, 2018; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003). Too, effective school leaders adopt

policies and procedures that support the organization's mission, retracting others. Educational

leaders for social justice identify and dismantle oppressive practices while replacing them with

ones more equitable and culturally appropriate (Furman, 2012). Change is paramount to the

work of social justice educational leaders, as for exemplary school leadership generally

(Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011). Theoharis (2007) found exemplary social justice

educational leaders "point to the necessity for change and help make the realities of change

happen" (p. 222). Furman (2012) likewise found social justice educational leadership described

throughout the literature as action-oriented and transformative, committed and persistent.

Extant research suggests social justice oriented educational leadership is a powerful

variable influencing student outcomes, especially concerning students from diverse backgrounds

(Furman, 2012; Reyes & Wagstaff, 2005). Leithwood and Riehl (2005) found educational

leadership is of greatest impact in schools serving minority students. More, they found effective

leadership in diverse schools integrates leadership best-practice with social justice ideals.

Santamaría (2014) and others have demonstrated the positive influence of leaders of color on

minority student outcomes, attributed in part to their sensitivity and motivation around issues of

social justice (Brooks & Watson, 2019; Singleton, 2014). The emerging body of research

contains a strong message about the importance of social justice educational leadership.

Advocates of social justice educational leadership have also critiqued this field. The

ambiguity of the concept is of central concern and difficult to resolve for the continuous

evolution of mainstream values priorities (Bogotch, 2002; Brooks et al., 2007). Too, scholarly

work on the subject remains mostly conceptual, with only limited case study evidence to ground

it. Altogether the topic lacks data, and needs for specificity regarding the capacities and

practices of social justice leaders (Furman, 2012). These conditions give way to singular

interpretations that avoid consolidation of thought (Brooks et al., 2007). Capper & Young (2014) have encouraged consolidation of the emerging theory on two points, the value of inclusion and the value of student achievement. Both points have been debated in the social justice literature, though Capper and Young (2014) insist they stand on solid empirical and moral ground. More, social justice educational leadership should avoid superhero narratives that suggest radical transformation could be the product of one person (Capper & Young, 2014; McBeth, 2008). Finally, work on social justice educational leadership should include the full range and intersection of student differences rather than treating one or another category in isolation, scholars have critiqued (Capper & Young, 2014; Theoharis, 2007).

Conceptual Framing

As previously cited, scholarly work on educational leadership for social justice remains primarily conceptual. Coming at the work with distinct interests, scholars have elevated different aspects of the phenomenon. Still synthesis of their multiple frameworks creates a relevant, if broad, lens for viewing school leadership. What follows is review and synthesis of several frameworks for conceiving social justice educational leadership.

To begin, McKenzie and collaborators (2008) published a conceptual framework defining social justice educational leadership according to three objectives. Per McKenzie et al. (2008), the first goal of the social justice leader is raising the academic achievement of all students. The second goal of this leadership is the development of critical consciousness in students. The third goal is the implementation of inclusive practices. The scholars posit this third value, inclusivity, buttresses the first two objectives. Achievement and criticality rise when schools deliver a rich and equitable learning environment for marginalized students.

Theoharis's 2007 framework of social justice leadership grew from his empirical work with seven self-identified social justice school principals. Commonalities in the principals' experience suggested a three-pronged framework of resistance. According to Theoharis, social justice educational leaders resist the historic marginalization of particular student demographics. More, these leaders encounter resistance to their transformative agenda. Also, these leaders practice resistance on a personal level in order to sustain against the adversity inherent in such contested work. Theoharis identified strategies these school leaders employed, like networking and collaboration, in order to persevere.

Theoharis and Brooks (2012) developed a different framework treating social justice educational leadership. Their framework attends to organizational context, describing a substantial relationship between leadership and contextual awareness. Social justice educational leaders must attend to organizational pretext. They should understand the equity history of their school and their community from a variety of perspectives. Educational leaders should attend to present context. They should be aware of the way power and other group dynamics manifest in the community today. Present dynamics should inform leaders' practice in pursuit of greater equity and justice. More, social justice educational leaders attend to the future or post-text. The metaphor of the arc of morality suggests a sense of destination toward which current activities align (Brooks et al., 2017).

Capper et al.'s 2006 framework treats the preparation of social justice educational leaders, underlining inadequate incorporation of social justice concepts in traditional leadership preparation programs. With their conceptual framework synthesizing 72 publications, the scholars propose a three-by-three matrix of considerations. Leadership preparation programs control three variables with respect to the educational experience they provide: curriculum,

pedagogy, and assessment. These variables yield the human capacities of effective social justice educational leaders: knowledge, critical consciousness, and practical skills. The scholars' detailing of this framework includes guidance for every intersection. Pedagogies in support of critical consciousness development include reflective journals, prejudice reduction workshops, and diversity panels, for example.

Likewise Furman (2012) published a conceptual framework addressing leadership preparation. From literature review, Furman interpreted social justice leadership as praxis. Praxis, per Furman, denotes the Freirian (1970) pairing of reflection and action. This praxis should occur across multiple, nested domains of the educational leadership experience. In the personal domain, praxis involves deep reflection on one's own biases, and the dedication of self to social justice priorities. In the interpersonal domain, praxis reveals the importance of authentic relationships to social justice work, and calls for respect and caring toward diverse others. Social justice work in the communal domain calls for reflection on democratic values and efforts to proactively include all groups in forums and processes. Praxis in the systemic domain involves critical reflection on the activities of the organization, plus effort to dismantle barriers and erect supports to student success. Finally, in the ecological domain praxis pushes acknowledgement of environmental issues surrounding schools, and necessitates a role for the leader in addressing these broad forces with affected stakeholders including students. Praxis across domains, then, is a sophisticated effort requiring knowledge and skills. Furman's work, too, includes capacity-building recommendations for leadership preparation programs.

Table 2 Synthesis of Frameworks: Salient Constructs of Social Justice Educational Leadership

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Construct	*Significance*	*Scholarship*
Inclusion	Ensuring diverse representation in the organization's day to day functioning; Amplifying historically marginalized voices; Providing targeted academic supports within the mainstream setting.	(Brooks et al., 2007) (Furman, 2012) (McKenzie, 2008)
Criticality	Deliberate reflection and the ability to identify sources of discrimination and oppression overlooked in mainstream society.	(Brooks et al., 2007) (Capper et al., 2006) (Furman, 2012) (McKenzie, 2008) (Theoharis & Brooks, 2012)
Relationship-Building	Developing authentic relationships with diverse stakeholders, so cultivating social capital necessary for enacting a reform platform.	(Brooks et al., 2007) (Furman, 2012) (Theoharis, 2007)
Capacity-Building	Increasing staff professionalism by reversing deficit thinking toward diversity and requiring culturally relevant pedagogy.	(Capper et al., 2006) (Furman, 2012)

These several frameworks approach social justice educational leadership from different angles, but reveal significant areas of commonality as delineated in Table 2. The commonalities can be understood as constructs of a broader, looser meta-frame. The first construct is inclusion. The social justice educational leader holds democratic values that prescribe equal opportunity

and respect for every person. In coming together, diverse stakeholders know and learn from one another. This comity is the unique opportunity of public schooling. However, it remains the responsibility of leadership to structure an inclusive program such that it serves the diverse needs of diverse membership. A second construct is criticality. The social justice educational leader understands and challenges traditional power dynamics that disadvantage diverse groups. The social justice educational leader reflects critically across levels of organization, from the personal to the systemic to the environmental. The leader also reflects across time, identifying and articulating the effect of power and resource disparities both currently and historically. Third is relationship-building. The work of social justice challenges the leader and her community, so requires trust built through honest and caring interactions over time. Change is not accomplished through the will of one individual. But when a leader opens the hearts of many, more is possible. A final construct is capacity building. Educational leadership for social justice is evidently a sophisticated endeavor requiring specific knowledge and skills. Leadership preparation programs are responsible for cultivating leaders to meet the needs of school communities now and into the future. The literature contains practical recommendations for preparing social justice educational leaders.

Empirical Applications

Ample research relates student academic failure to the absence of social justice considerations in schools (Theorharis, 2007; Theoharis & Brooks, 2012; Horsford, 2019). Still, few scholars have formally applied the lens of social justice educational leadership to school phenomena. More, what applications have taken place do not link findings to the previously described frameworks. These limited findings remain relevant, however, included here as part of the foundation for new study.

Some work exists documenting the treatment of social justice in school leadership preparation programs. In 2002, Jackson and Kelley published the findings of a national survey of educational leaders. They found leaders' preparation programs did not treat the educational implications of students' poverty or minority race status. Since then, case studies engaging multitude leaders have revealed the omission of social justice exploration by their leadership preparation programs (Miller & Martin, 2015; Santamaría, 2014). Again, perceiving a need to systematically address social justice issues in school leader preparation, scholars have completed much conceptual work in this area (Bogotch & Reyes-Guerra, 2014; Brown, 2004; Capper et al., 2006; Furman, 2012).

Studies have documented leaders' use of equity audits as an effective tool for social justice work. First, auditing has uncovered intra-district resource disparities in many school organizations (Darling-Hammond, 2002; Skrla et al., 2004). More, these disparities are found linked to local patterns of race and class stratification, with negative impact on the academic achievement of disadvantaged students (Condron and Roscigno, 2003). Researchers have found auditing an effective tool for engaging diverse stakeholders in collective reflection on bias and ethics in their school communities (Scanlan, 2012). The objective evidence produced through audit can prompt cognitive dissonance and erode resistance to change.

Santamaría (2014) explored the unique social justice impact of educational leaders of color. Interviewing principals and deans, Santamaría found many ways in which these school leaders practice leadership differently. For example, she found leaders of color willingly engage their communities in critical conversations about sensitive social topics. They tend to reference data and scholarship as a strategy to objectify and ground these exchanges. Santamaría found these social justice leaders acutely aware of the impact of negative stereotyping, and working to

protect stakeholder groups from disadvantages of that phenomenon. Finally, Santamaría identified in these leaders a sense of responsibility toward their work, grounded in their own racial identities. Leaders of color perceive their special potential to positively affect students, so feel pulled to deliver those benefits. To note, similar research confirms the unique benefits teachers of color convey to diverse students in their classrooms (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015; Ingersoll & May, 2011).

Theoharis (2007, 2008, 2010) has published multiple qualitative studies of principals pursuing social justice educational leadership. Across these studies Theoharis found convergence in social justice principals' commitment to raising achievement for historically marginalized student populations. He found these principals are adept at cultivating positive school culture, specifically through inclusive practices. Last, across the board these principals encountered resistance to their reform efforts. Theoharis found social justice educational leaders need strategies to sustain themselves personally and professionally while facing resistance. Authentic relationships in and outside the organization constituted one source of strength for these leaders.

Though not explicitly linked to the published frameworks, these limited empirical findings point back to the same constructs elevated across the conceptual scholarship. Specifically, these studies found capacity building, criticality, relationship building, and inclusion are characteristic of social justice educational leadership. Together the scholars have raised a call for additional empirical application of the lens (Capper & Young, 2014; Ryan, 2010; Theoharis, 2008). Notably, no work has regarded the practice of social justice educational leadership at the level of the superintendency. This study will contribute to the field with findings from a new unit of analysis.

Sister Theories

Full appreciation of social justice educational leadership benefits too from an understanding of related schools of thought. Two prominent theories precede and gave rise to the emergence of this one; they are theories of critical race and of cultural responsiveness. Critical race and cultural responsiveness have origin and application outside the field of educational leadership; their reach is more broad. Social justice educational leadership draws tenets from both theories and bends them to fit the particular opportunities of school leadership. More, the new theory seeks a practical application of these tenets by leaders in school organizations; it is action-oriented. Further discussion of the theories illuminates these points.

Critical race theory took shape in the last decades of the 20th century. Influenced by the reflections of Du Bois (1903) and Woodson (1933), the theory engages manifestations of racial power as a lens for viewing social realities in the post-civil rights era (Crenshaw, 2011). Legal scholars generated the primary tenets of this theory, such as Whiteness as property, through critical review of law and policy (Capper, 1995). Following Kozol's (1991) revelation of *Savage Inequalities* between the educational experience of middle-class White children and poor children of color, Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) brought this lens to the education field. Critical race theory suggests the unequal inputs and outputs of education are not surprising, rather the predictable result of persistent social marginalization (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Historical practice of discrimination is understood to have influenced the structures of schooling, such that even today American children experience education differently based on race (Brooks & Watson, 2019; Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Larson & Ovando, 2001). Moreover, children of color continue to face the adversity of racism at school and generally (Horsford, 2010, 2014, 2019).

In her 20-year review of critical race theory in education, Capper (2015) articulated six tenets that constitute a comprehensively and commonly referenced framing of the theory for this field. Critical race theory assumes the prevalence and permanence of racism in the United States. The theory understands Whiteness as property, that majority race status affords material privilege (e.g., control of the mainstream educational curriculum). Critical race theory values counter-storytelling; stories overshadowed by the majoritarian narrative are regarded as valuable sources of potential truths. Interest convergence is another tenet of the theory, the assumption that feasible avenues to Black progress must be consistent with White interests. Critical race theory critiques what are considered liberal values, for example the neutrality of law and the meritocratic pinning of the society. Finally, critical race theory understands parallels in the conditions facing different marginalized groups, so takes interest in surfacing oppression anywhere.

In summary, critical race theory is an anti-racist movement born from recognition of racism's broad continuance. The heart of the theory is criticality, the hard grappling with status quo forces in order to uncover sources of injustice and to legitimize reform movements. The theory understands schools, as social institutions, to embody racism and related inequities. Schools, according to the theory, need for critical review.

Ladson-Billings (1995) also brought ideas of cultural relevance to the field of education. With her initial theory, Ladson-Billings pushed educators to fight achievement gaps with pedagogical change, appreciating the potential for a fitting intersection between culture and teaching. In theory, teachers' incorporation of students' home cultures and narratives helps bridge the gap between marginalized students and mainstream schools. Similarly, Gay (1994) described culturally responsive teaching as the inclusion of diverse students' life experiences and

perspectives in order to make school learning more meaningful to them. The approach requires not only teachers' broad knowledge of subject matter, but also deep knowledge of their own students.

More recently, Khalifa reinvigorated the lens by shifting its orientation toward school leadership (Khalifa et al., 2016). Culturally responsive school leadership acknowledges the influence of school leaders on classroom-level happenings. The school leader honors difference through inclusivity, and organizes academic services accordingly. The school leader is responsible for adopting culturally responsive curricula, and obtaining related materials. The school leader hires culturally appreciative teachers, and retrains other faculty members through targeted professional development. Doing these things, the culturally responsive leader not only affirms minoritized students but also facilitates affirming interactions across groups (Brooks & Normore, 2010). Ultimately, the culturally responsive school leader looks beyond the classroom as point of analysis, and toward the generation of multicultural appreciation in the school environment and greater community (Ezzani & Brooks, 2018; McCray & Beachum, 2011). Neatly put, the culturally responsive educational leader engages stakeholders in a community defined not by its sameness, rather by its difference (Brown, 2004).

In synthesis, the emerging theory of social justice educational leadership conceives of social justice in schools as the critical examination of group disparities, the cultivation of cross-cultural respect, and the pursuit of equitable life opportunities for all students (Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Dantley & Tillman, 2010). As does critical race theory, this lens assumes bias in mainstream society including the institution of schooling. As with culturally responsive theory, the lens highlights the potential of public schools to cultivate affinity across diversity. Social justice educational leadership takes core thinkings from critical race and

culturally responsive theories and reframes them in a system with new and increasing implications for school leaders.

Contemporary Connections

A final focus of this literature review calls attention to a specific equity consideration facing contemporary schools, that is the cultural mismatch between students and educators (McDonald & Zeichner, 2009; Ingersoll & May, 2011). Educators, generally, do not identify racially with their students (NCES, 2018; USDOE, 2016). Specifically, 82% of public school teachers and 80% of school administrators are White. At the same time, 51% of public school students represent minoritized races, a rapidly increasing percentage. Understanding from the literature that educators of color provide special support and protection to students of color, their underrepresentation in the teacher workforce is a disadvantage to these students (Cherng & Halpin, 2016; Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015; Ingersoll & May, 2011; Santamaría, 2014). Too, literature affirms White educators often bring deficit perspectives toward minoritized cultures that manifest in further marginalization of disadvantaged students (Horsford, 2014; Milner, 2012; Reed & Swaminathan, 2014). These phenomena constitute just one contemporary example of a need for social justice educational leadership, that is leaders prepared to professionalize their teaching faculties and build cultural bridges in their school communities. The concern also justifies this study's effort to interpret and share transferable social justice practices effected by one African American superintendent leading through a challenging sociopolitical context.

Overview, Social Justice Educational Leadership

The above review of social justice educational leadership began with what is known of educational leaders' impact generally. Next the review synthesized conceptual understandings of

social justice as a general term, and also as a term specifically applied in the education scholarship. This work grounded the subsequent review of an emerging theory in educational leadership, that is social justice leadership. Analysis of several conceptual frameworks yielded core constructs: criticality, relationship building, inclusion, and capacity building. Summary of empirical research employing the lens underscored need for additional research applications. A return to theory then helped situate social justice educational leadership in relation to broader, more established traditions. A final section treating contemporary considerations pushed the discussion full circle, raising concrete realities of today's schools and demonstrating demand for the study and practice of social justice educational leadership. According to Furman (2012) and others, "the literature offers few specifics about the actual practice of social justice leadership in K-12 schools and the capacities needed by school leaders to engage in this practice" (p. 192). This study exploring a relationship between social justice leadership and crisis management through the case of Dr. Rosa Atkins' leadership of Charlottesville City Schools intends to render findings intrinsically interesting and naturally relevant to further scholarship and practice.

Chapter Summary

The literature review addressed two concepts not formally linked by the academy of either. However, these literatures reveal lessons in kind. Briefly, these literatures communicate the preeminence of social crisis, criticality as prevention, and the need for leadership to steady organizations by consolidating change. Social tensions related to justice issues cross contexts of time and place, rendering all institutions vulnerable to crisis. Crisis management literature elevates the importance of organizational learning, that is critical reflection and root-cause analysis, for crisis prevention and resolution. This literature identifies the leader as the agent most capable of facilitating an organization's learning. Effective leaders probe the social context

and vulnerabilities of their organizations. They proactively engage their communities in discourse around sensitive issues, relying on political and social capital to protect themselves from fallout. The social justice educational leader is, as the crisis literature suggests, clairvoyant. She perceives injustice in the institutions of schooling, and feels the ramifications of injustice for stakeholders. Through criticality, involving discourse and reform, the social justice leader reveals injustice to her community. Through cultural responsiveness, involving capacity-building and inclusion, the leader replaces what is broken with better services for all students. Through genuine relationships with broad and diverse members, the social justice leader applies herself in a sustained campaign for change. The social justice educational leader instinctively manages for crisis as she pursues the moral transformation of her organization.

CHAPTER III: DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

To review, this study began with reflection on social divide and related tragedy, a contemporary condition felt at all levels of society including schools. Broadly, the researcher inquired about a relationship between social justice educational leadership and crisis management or abatement. More specifically, the researcher asked how the social justice orientation of one superintendent prepared a school district to withstand a crisis of violent racism in the immediate community. Research questions guided the researcher's decision-making, directing her toward appropriate study design and methodology (Brooks & Normore, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 2014,). This chapter explains design and methodology decisions made in alignment with the study's driving questions. A first section contains overview and justification of qualitative case study design, also an accounting of the researcher's related positionality. A second section details the study methodology, including data collection techniques, data analysis procedures, and the strengths and limitations of chosen methods. The chapter concludes with overview of the full research plan.

Research Design

To begin, qualitative research rests on a foundation of constructivist and interpretivist inquiry paradigms that assume truth is relative, not absolute (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Knowledge yields from interactions between actor and environment, including a dialectical exchange between actor and researcher. Socially constructed tools such as language and symbols transmit human messaging and further mediate truth (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Schwandt, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 2014). This study treated a complex social occurrence with no possibility to control or isolate variables. The researcher pursued a subjective truth primarily

through interaction with diverse stakeholders. For its particular interest in the way people behave, interact, and understand the world, the study fit a qualitative design.

Characteristics of qualitative research establish a clear distinction between this and the quantitative methodological tradition. As truth is contextually embedded, so the qualitative researcher collects data in the natural setting. Rather than following an established procedure, the qualitative researcher maintains flexibility toward data collection processes. Not a neutral observer, the researcher participates in knowledge construction. Specifically, the external researcher contributes the etic perspective through her work of gathering and analyzing data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016; Brooks & Normore, 2015). The products of research, then, are appreciated as fully human constructions with related benefits and limitations. The qualitative researcher presents these findings in the form of verbal reports richly detailing patterns and relationships (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The reporting includes presentation of understandings that, while not scientifically generalizable, are often relevant and transferable (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016; Brooks & Normore, 2015).

Qualitative research as a methodological category holds within it several research designs. Again, for the constructivist assumption on which it rests, the qualitative tradition treats design as flexible. Design is secondary to the demands and revelations of context (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016; Creswell, 2009). Case study design involves in-depth empirical inquiry into a contemporary phenomenon and its real-world situation (Yin, 2014). As described by Stake (2010), it is the distinctive nature of a circumstance that provides boundaries and establishes a limited case. At the same time, Yin (2014) noted a blurring of boundaries that occurs between a noted phenomenon and its own environment. A case, then, is both embedded in its specific environment and distinctive from the greater surroundings.

With respect to typology, this is an intrinsic case study (Stake, 2005). A particular

phenomenon emerged from the landscape of regular issues and happenings, grabbing the

attention of the researcher. The case events, their context, and the actors themselves, are

remarkable. The researcher sought to deduce experiential knowledge from these actors' detailed

accounting, not to push their stories into any prescribed theory or formula. While the researcher

occupied a position outside the case, her orientation was decidedly inward and she came

prepared to learn (Yin, 2014). Triangulated perspectives and counter-narratives are necessary to

provide the full depth and breadth of detail such study requires. For its embrace of multiple and

alternate viewpoints, case study design suits research on racism, social marginalization, and

related issues present in this project (Santamaría, 2014).

And yet, case study data inevitably passes through the etic lens, taking on universal

properties as it undergoes analysis and later consumption. It is as the researcher filters data

through a personal thought process that connections and applications appear. It is when the

reader applies her own intellect that a case takes on meaning (Stake, 2005). Meaning rests in the

exchange between internal and external perspectives, between what is particular and what is

universal, between the interesting and the instrumental. The intrinsic case is not without

instrumentality, only that instrumentality is not its purpose. The case study of crisis events, each

infinitely unique, constitutes an important part of the field of organizational management

scholarship (Richardson, 1993). Crisis case study reveals common opportunities for

organizations to detect their own vulnerabilities. Such cases have long provided an effective

medium for managers' practice and development of problem-solving skills.

This study treats the case of Charlottesville City Schools and Dr. Rosa Atkins' tenure as

leader of the organization before, during, and after the White supremacist rallies of August,

2017. A phenomenon, the racially bifurcated school community experienced this violent crisis of national import on the eve of a new school year. Remarkably, the organization seemed to rise above the event in peace, strength, and conviction. Yin (2014) wrote of the alignment between 'how' questioning and case study research design. This particular case prompts questions of how the school community prepared for, responded to, and rose above sociopolitical crisis. As suggested by the crisis literature, the answer to these questions likely resides in the leader's activity across her tenure and even before the event's acute unfolding. A study in the field of educational leadership, the researcher looked to Superintendent Atkins as primary influencer and focus of analysis.

Recognizing the researcher necessarily influences the course of any qualitative study, this researcher discusses her own positionality here. I am a former member of the Charlottesville City Schools community, a high school teacher with the organization during my first five years as an educator, 2009 to 2014. I enjoyed working with Charlottesville students and felt challenged to meet their needs. I participated enthusiastically in diversity and equity initiatives offered by the school division throughout my time there. I welcomed Superintendent Atkins to my classroom on numerous occasions and worked with her to launch a Mandarin Chinese program still in place. Having relocated home to Roanoke, Virginia, I began work in school administration and new parent life. I continue to feel nostalgia for Charlottesville City Schools as I knew it, and appreciation for the organization as I perceive it now.

Method

Thick, descriptive qualitative reporting requires the researcher's consideration of multitude data and sources (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016; Yin, 2014). More, triangulation both of data and of method bolster the trustworthiness of research findings. This study involved

collection of the full variety of available evidence. As the study treated what are primarily past events, diverse stakeholder interviewing was the dominant strategy for data collection. Multitude documents also contained relevant insights from in and around this broadly regarded phenomenon. Constant comparison and open coding describe the researcher's approach to data analysis. What follows is overview of implemented data collection and data analysis procedures.

Interview

In order to gather a diversity of perspectives and so extend the reliability of findings, the researcher purposefully sampled stakeholders at different levels of the Charlottesville City Schools organization. The sample also included select community members and stakeholders from outside the organization. In accordance with case study design, interviews were semi-structured. Broad and flexible questioning supported the dialectic process and co-construction of knowledge (Strauss & Corbin, 2014). Again, a qualitative researcher values multiple perspectives and complex realities rather than singular or objective claims to meaning (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016).

A series of interviews with the principal participant Atkins followed a uniquely prepared protocol. A first interview took place at the onset of the data collection process. This interview treated questions of Atkins' life history, professional objectives, and worldview. A second interview pursued her career events and decision-making as leader of Charlottesville City Schools before, during, and after a global crisis event in her immediate community. This interview took place toward the end of data collection, informed by data analysis already conducted. A final round of communication with the Superintendent involved discussion of study findings, a sort of cumulative member-check that concluded both the data collection and the data analysis portions of the study.

The researcher has appreciated the sensitive nature of this participant's contribution to the study. Inquiry and representation of the lives of participants is always an exercise in ethics (Agee, 2009). This inquiry opened the Superintendent to some risk, as she is a practicing leader of a de facto political organization. More, the researcher asked the Superintendent to comment on events of national interest and controversy. For the high-profile nature of the events under consideration, it was not possible to grant anonymity to this particular study participant. So given, the researcher took explicit steps to treat this and every other study participant with high ethical regard.

At the initial interview, the researcher requested Atkins' permission to hold conversations with an extensive listing of proposed participants at diverse levels of the organization. In response, the Superintendent granted her carte blanche support for interviews with any stakeholder either in or outside the organization. The researcher did inquire of the Superintendent her recommendation for inclusion of any specific participants in the study. Atkins made no specific recommendations. Altogether the researcher invited 27 individuals to participate in this study as general stakeholders. Of these, fifteen ultimately consented and completed the interview process.

The researcher interviewed past and present members of the district's school board, central office leadership, building-level administration, teaching faculty, and support staff. Current parents and former students also participated. The researcher conducted one interview with a regional school division leader. With respect to gender, five participants were male and ten female. With respect to race, five participants were people of minority race and ten Caucasian. Several participants wore multiple hats in relation to the Charlottesville City Schools organization. For example, the participant pool included seven current parents of the school

district. The group also included three professors of education at various Virginia universities. Notably, with respect for power dynamics and potential risk to participants, general participant identities remained confidential throughout the study and were at no point disclosed to the superintendent.

More, to simplify reporting and further protect identities, the researcher assigned these general stakeholders to broad categories for the reporting of data. Categories created include leader stakeholder, teacher stakeholder, community stakeholder and student stakeholder. Assigned categories reflect participants' primary relationship to the Charlottesville City Schools organization, prioritizing any professional affiliation. Again, the researcher referred to these categories when referencing stakeholder contributions throughout the Chapter 4 findings sections. In contrast, quotations from Superintendent Atkins were attributed to her explicitly. Table 3 provides overview of the participant pool with respect to these categories.

Table 3 Participant Categorization

Stakeholder Category	Primary Relationship to Organization	Number of Participants
Principal Participant Dr. Rosa Atkins	• District Superintendent	1
Leader Stakeholders	• School Board Members • Division-Level Administrators • Building Principals • Regional District Leadership	6
Teacher Stakeholders	• Instructional Coordinators • Teachers	4
Community Stakeholders	• Support Staffers • Parents	3
Student Stakeholders	• Alumni, Class of 2019	2

The researcher intended all initial interviews to take place in-person. She planned to travel to Charlottesville to meet with participants individually during regular work hours. While the initial five interviews occurred as planned, conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic required remaining interviews to take place online via video-conferencing technology. The reliance on video-conferencing as a medium did not significantly limit the quality of these interviews, in the opinion of the researcher.

With further respect to interview procedure, the researcher suggested a two-hour window for each interview with principal participant Atkins. The researcher anticipated a one-hour

window for interviews with all other participants. Interviews fit these time durations approximately for a total of approximately 20 hours. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. The researcher shared transcriptions with participants and welcomed their corrective reflections. The researcher requested follow-up communications as necessary for clarification and extension of the data.

Again with respect to research ethics around human subjects, the researcher intended full diligence for the fair and careful treatment of study participants. To that extent, the researcher collected participants' informed, written consent for inclusion of their statements for sole purpose of this study. The researcher crafted interview protocols in advance, in order to gather input from advising faculty. Copies of interview protocols have been included in the dissertation appendix. Again, the researcher asked participants to check their interview statements. Any question was expunged from the transcript record at a participant's request. All data and analysis were kept on a secured server and will be destroyed at the culmination of the project, according to university policy. Again, given the sensitive nature of the case under study, the concerns and overall wellbeing of voluntary participants has been prioritized in the researcher's preparation of the final product.

Document Analysis

For its import at both local and national levels, the Charlottesville case generated a multitude of documents appropriate for consideration as data in this study. Relevant documents included both outsider (etic) and insider (emic) treatment of the case. Outside documents taken into consideration were local newspaper coverage spanning the Superintendent's tenure. The researcher searched the archives of the leading local paper, *The Daily Progress*, and other Charlottesville circulars. National level periodicals have also covered developments in this

school division. The researcher reviewed the archives of multiple national news sources including the *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* specifically. Using search terms "Charlottesville City Schools" and "Atkins" the researcher pulled relevant results then grouped all of these documents according to temporal classifications. Pre-crisis articles came from January, 2005 through July, 2017. This time period covered Dr. Atkins' tenure from its 2006 onset, and also several publications reaching back to the end of her predecessor's superintendency. In-crisis articles were published from August, 2017 to December of the following year. This time span covered the August, 2017 White supremacist rally through the October, 2018 New York Times publication and immediate fallout, what ultimately presented as two crises affectign the organization. Articles labelled post-crisis are from January, 2019 through May, 2020. This time frame captured a period of intentional leadership in the wake of crises that has continued through and beyond the time of this report's finalization.

The school division and superintendent themselves generated a quantity of relevant documentation over the course of the Superintendent's 14-year tenure. These documents capture an insider perspective on organizational and community happenings. Documents collected as study data included official statements of the division and social media feeds of both the school division and the Superintendent. Again, the researcher made effort to collect samples of documentation from before, during, and after the crisis event.

As to order of events, the researcher pulled many publicly available documents before commencing the interview portion of data collection. In effect, these documents seeded data analysis for the overall study. At the conclusion of each interview the researcher inquired of the participant regarding any additional documentary evidence. Suggested documents were collected and reviewed. Several participants contacted the researcher even after their interviews

to share articles and communications newly generated. All documents were assessed with respect to their levels of abstraction, formality, and bias (Brooks & Normore, 2015).

In total the researcher gathered more than 100 pieces of documentary evidence and analyzed these as part of the full body of study data. These documents supported the understanding of themes and development of findings. In short, the contribution of documentary data to the overall study was one of unanticipated importance. A typology of analyzed documents, a matrix displaying by source and by time, is available as appendix to the dissertation.

Observation

The researcher intended for data collection to include observation of the principal participant during regular work hours and while conducting routine activities. Explained by Brooks and Normore (2015), field observation is a technique for determining messages and relationships not easily expressed through interpersonal exchange. The researcher planned that observation would, in this case, provide opportunity to better understand aspects of leadership style, personality, and organizational culture so much a part of general activity that they are unlikely to be noted or addressed in formal interview. Observation would also support the cultivation of trust between researcher and participant (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). As the participant feels seen and understood by the investigator first-hand, so the participant may become more comfortable and open in their research interactions. Importantly, as this study was narrow in focus and treated the work of just one educational leader, it called for collection of the full extent of data available on that subject. Field observation supports a deeper, more thorough gathering of data through triangulation. Different from secondary accounts gained in interview,

through observation the researcher obtains an original appreciation of the phenomenon under consideration.

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic prompted government recommendations of social distancing and the closing of Virginia public schools. These conditions began in March, 2020 and continued throughout the months of data collection. Unable to complete planned observations, the researcher attempted to account for the missing method triangulation with further data triangulation. The researcher was able to expand her proposed general participant pool from 12 to 15 participants. The conduct of additional interviews supported data analysis and the trustworthiness of findings. Fortunately, a prior relationship between the researcher and the Superintendent afforded a certain degree of trust and mutual regard. Data collection did not seem limited for lack of trust between researcher and primary stakeholder, rather the Superintendent seemed to willingly and openly share of her experience including accounts quite personal in nature. Despite missing observation sessions, this study yielded large quantities of data that sufficiently supported the researcher's induction of findings and development of conclusions.

Data analysis

Data analysis is a systematic process for sorting and synthesizing descriptive data toward the revelation of meaningful research findings (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). With regard to this qualitative case study, the researcher implemented the following approach to data analysis. The researcher chose a constant comparative method in which analysis commenced upon the first data obtainment then continued throughout the researcher's interactions with multiple sources. That is, the researcher analytically engaged with the data on an ongoing basis, discovering and modeling relationships as they emerged. These emergent findings guided the scope and direction

of subsequent data collection. As the researcher achieved data saturation, formal analysis also drew to a close (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Merriam, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 2014).

To systematically and reliably uncover patterns and themes in the data, the researcher practiced open coding. She reviewed all data gathered - print documents and interview transcripts - then imported relevant data to the Nvivo qualitative data analysis software. Within the Nvivo program the researcher again read the collected documents and interview transcripts. The researcher assigned codes to units of the data: sentences or paragraphs. Initially collected documents yielded an initial set of codes. The researcher reworked this preliminary code framework with each additional interview, adding to and editing the code schema. The researcher continuously evaluated and reformatted the schema according to the emergent frequency, strength, and situation of each code. Note, code categories arose from the data themselves, but also from theoretical perspectives present in the reviewed literature and from substantive social values the researcher may have held (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016; Strauss & Corbin, 2014; Yin, 2014).

The researcher continued to code the data in this way, refining a categorical framework while simultaneously assigning detail to each category through properties and dimensions revealed (Strauss & Corbin, 2014; Yin, 2014). Second and third review of the collective code schema supported the configuration of findings along a causal continuum or axial coding paradigm (Strauss & Corbin, 2014). At this point the researcher did engage in a process of analytical collaboration, that is a discussion and check of emergent findings, with a qualified academic peer. To summarize, the researcher's analytic process was iterative. Analysis was

primarily inductive and data-driven, but still informed in part by theories and concepts present in the literature.

Strengths and Limitations

Any discussion of limitations begs the question of a study's reliability and trustworthiness. In qualitative case study design, triangulation and member-checking are strategies for strengthening methodological rigor overall (Brooks & Normore, 2015; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This study did achieve triangulation of data. Specifically, the researcher held semi-structured interviews with multiple participants purposefully selected to represent the diverse levels of the stakeholder pool. Perspectives both inside and outside the organization were sought. More, this study achieved triangulation of method. The study drew predominantly from interview data, but document analysis also contributed significantly to the development of findings.

Though the study lacked true theory triangulation, the researcher did consult with her faculty advisor and another research colleague as to judgments made throughout the analysis process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2016; Creswell, 2007; Denzin, 1978). These dispassionate field experts periodically engaged with the researcher to discuss the discernment of findings, so helped protect this process from the researcher's personal bias. With respect to member checking, all participants were requested to review interview transcripts and to submit their follow-up reflections. The researcher did engage participants in follow-up conversations as appropriate. Finally, the researcher did invite the principal participant, Superintendent Atkins, to review emergent findings on several occasions before finalization of the report. Overall, the study reflects the researcher's due diligence toward strength of methodology through reliability and trustworthiness demonstrations.

With respect to limitations, the qualitative case study design is inherently limited at statistical generalization (Yin, 2014). The distinctive conditions that define a case also bind its prescriptive power. The case of Atkins' leadership of Charlottesville City Schools through crisis is infinitely unique and does not represent a sample. Still, information presented in the literature review suggests the conditions that gave rise to crisis in Charlottesville are prevalent across contemporary American society. More, an organization's experience of any global crisis event is a regular occurrence that presents challenge and opportunity for leadership. The case, then, stood to produce relevant, transferable findings for scholars and practitioners of educational leadership generally (Brooks & Normore, 2015). While case studies cannot be generalized to populations, they may serve to expand or generalize theoretical propositions and in fact this is their purpose (Yin, 2014).

While ethical and necessary, the researcher's effort to protect participants can limit a study. The vulnerability of participants in any study demands ethical consideration and protective efforts on the part of the researcher (Agee, 2009; Bogdan & Biklen, 2016). This study treated a violent crisis of racism that continues to draw national attention and debate. The pressured conditions required careful regard for study participants. Participants might have been sensitive to the public sharing of their views on the substantive topic of race relations, for example. Accordingly, the researcher provided extensive opportunity for abstention and for member-checking, although participants' self-censorship might have diminished the depth of data collection.

Too, it is important to acknowledge the potential limiting influence of power dynamics on data collection in this study (Brooks & Normore, 2015). Given the unit of analysis is the acting district superintendent, participants at lower levels of the organizational hierarchy might

not have felt free to honestly share their perspectives on the study's topic of leadership. Likewise, the Superintendent might have felt limited in her ability to share fully of her personal and professional experiences for fear of critical reception by stakeholders. Vulnerable to one another, their particular relationships of power limited data collection from these diverse participants to some extent. So established, the researcher is sincerely appreciative to the Superintendent and all participants who were willing to engage with this study and its related vulnerabilities.

Chapter Summary

In asking of the relationship between leadership and crisis, the researcher revealed a constructivist orientation toward truth and knowledge obtainment. The researcher assumed knowledge to be co-constructed through the synthesis of multiple perspectives, each perspective situated in a unique context. This philosophical foundation supported a qualitative research orientation for its concern with naturally occurring data, descriptive data, and negotiated meaning. Given the distinctive phenomenon of crisis leadership in Charlottesville, the study fit a case study design. The researcher drew data principally from interviews with purposefully selected participants. Data from documents also pertained. An observation component of the research plan was unable to be completed. The researcher performed constant comparative analysis using open coding procedures to develop and refine a framework of categories and relationships. Research methods included several approaches to triangulation, also member-checking, to bolster the trustworthiness of findings. For its qualitative case study design, the study is not broadly generalizable, but has produced transferable insights for theory and practice.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Collection and analysis of study data have supported the conception of findings, here presented. The study supported three major findings, each of distinct vantage. Simply stated, the first finding relates to the broad category of crisis, while the second addresses leadership and the third social justice. The purpose of this chapter is delineation of the found phenomena in terms of component concepts and dimensions. Examples from data substantiate the researcher's claims.

Global Crisis and Local Accountability: The Secondary Crisis of Organization

The first study finding addresses the nature and structure of crisis - its phased unfolding and implications for management. The Charlottesville data showed the phenomenon of a secondary crisis, a local crisis experience derived from the initial global event. This section explores the phased evolution of crisis from global to local, and related implications for an organization. The Charlottesville case suggests an organization will ultimately be held responsible for aspects of crisis occurring beyond it. That is, an internal crisis of accountability will come to the local organization over time as part of the overall course of global crisis unfolding. To note, here the term global is used in a general sense and in contrast to the term local. Here global implies conditions that cross the boundaries of comparatively smaller units of social organization.

This section explores the secondary crisis of local accountability that emerges following a broader global event. Subcategories of the major phenomenon emerge from the Charlottesville case. A first subcategory is labelled *trial by fire*. Events in Charlottesville suggest that crisis stokes broad criticality in its aftermath. That is, as crisis effects damages at global scale, so it engages a broad network of stakeholders and prompts their critical regard. These crisis

stakeholders examine all levels of society, including local organizations. They investigate

through a new lens - a lens constituted of the crisis dynamics.

A second subcategory is that of *guilt by fractalization*. Charlottesville demonstrated how

the dynamics of a crisis event are omnipresent. Because the organization is a fractal of greater

society, a small part representative of the whole, it is likewise vulnerable and accountable to

global happenings. As paradigm shifts and judgment renders in the greater society, so will

happen at the local level. A local organization, such as a school district, will be found to contain

elements similar to a broader crisis. In the case of the broader crisis of social justice that took

place in August, 2017, investigation of the local school district ultimately revealed its own

racially biased distribution of wealth, privilege, and opportunity.

A third subcategory is *calculated intervention*. Effective crisis leadership employs

strategies that address the organization's evolving relationship to crisis. Initially the

organization's relationship to crisis may be that of victim or bystander. This initial relationship

calls for a certain leadership response. But as the organization assumes greater causal

responsibility for crisis dynamics, so an effective leader adapts her approach. Organizational

learning is a fundamental leadership strategy in the secondary crisis phase. Leadership strategies

for crisis optimization receive more detailed treatment under the second major finding of this

study.

These above paragraphs preview an observed phenomenon and related subcategories that

emerged from the Charlottesville case. What follows is more thorough analysis of each

subcategory, including the identification and explanation of related concepts. Examples from the

research data substantiate the analysis and are referenced throughout.

Trial by Fire: Popular Criticality Post-Crisis

Trial by fire refers to the surge of stakeholder criticality that occurs in the wake of acute crisis, part of the overall process of crisis unfolding. In this Charlottesville case, the global event awakened stakeholder criticality around similar manifestations of crisis dynamics at the local level. This development of heightened stakeholder criticality took place on three fronts. First, the broad crisis event generated interest and understanding of conflict dynamics among the general public. Second, local stakeholders then identified these same dynamics within their local school district. Third, the voice of local critics became amplified as they found audience among the newly engaged global public. Seen in Charlottesville, stakeholder criticality came full circle from global to local, then to global again. Local stakeholders' criticisms reflected an evolving mainstream sentiment. Whereas criticism of the status quo would likely have been rejected by an organization's establishment or treated as taboo pre-crisis, in the post-crisis period such criticism reflects an emergent paradigm and is difficult to ignore. Again, data from the Charlottesville case illustrate there occurs a swell of popular criticism in and around an organization post-crisis.

Rise in Global Awareness

Specifically, the Charlottesville case demonstrates how a crisis event generates interest in an underlying global conflict. The August, 2017 White supremacist rally had broad roots and broad reach - it was never confined to locality. With respect to the crisis origins, the rally participants purported to protest Charlottesville's plans to remove a Confederate statue from a downtown park. This statue removal consideration was part of a nation-wide movement joined by many localities following the racially-targeted mass shooting in Charleston in 2015. More, the rally participants' attendance reflected another nation-wide development, the increase in

White supremacy activism also since 2015. The majority of protesters came to the rally from across many states and affiliations outside the Charlottesville community. A fact-check piece by Glenn Kessler of the Washington Post reported,

> The city's actions inspired a group of neo-Nazis, white supremacists and related groups to schedule the "Unite the Right" rally for the weekend of Aug. 12, 2017, in Charlottesville. There is little dispute over the makeup of the groups associated with the rally. A well-known white nationalist, Richard Spencer, was involved; former Ku Klux Klan head David Duke was a scheduled speaker… Counterdemonstrations were planned by people opposed to the alt-right, such as church groups, civil rights leaders and anti-fascist activists known as "antifa," many of whom arrived with sticks and shields. A militia group associated with the Patriot movement announced it was also going to hold an event called 1Team1Fight Unity in Charlottesville on Saturday, August 12, rescheduling an event that has been planned for Greenville, S.C., 370 miles away. Other militia groups also made plans to attend.

Local stakeholders understood the global dynamics converging on their city. Said one teacher stakeholder, "I heard this from both Black and White students, that a lot of the White supremacists were from out of town. That has been confirmed." According to another teacher, "The kids were resentful that Charlottesville was getting such a bad rap when they (protesters) just used this one issue and Charlottesville as a platform for their agenda." These reflections support the idea that the conflict was not specific to locality, but rather the crisis and Charlottesville became symbols of more universal dynamics.

The crisis event did extend the reach of the underlying conflict. A review of major news outlets including the New York Times, the BBC, the Washington Post, National Public Radio,

and Time Magazine confirmed their extensive coverage of the rally's unfolding. These media networks shared dramatic images from the scene. Their reporting saturated the mainstream news cycle for weeks. "It was a bit overkill," reflected one teacher stakeholder, "It inundated the news." More, leaders at all levels of government and celebrity weighed in with their opinions. Evident in the news and in social media activity, the President's own response was felt to sympathize with the White supremacist movement and so enlivened activity on both sides of the country's deepening sociopolitical divide. A quick search of Google Trends confirms the worldwide impact of the Unite the Right rally. The terms "Charlottesville" and "White supremacy" exploded across the internet, not only in the fifty states but also in six continents. These terms reached all-time internet frequency highs in the month of August, 2017. Affirming the global impact of the event one teacher stakeholder reflected, "Charlottesville became a hashtag."

Ultimately this crisis event broadened mainstream awareness of the persistence of not only structural racism but also personal racism across the country. The event also clarified the surge in size and confidence of a far-right political faction. Again these crisis dynamics were not specific to Charlottesville but rather nation-wide and even worldwide developments. One publication reflected on the global nature of the conflict, "The Charlottesville violence and the White House reaction to it illustrate the strange and frustrating landscape of White supremacy in the United States today" (Anti-Defamation League, 2018).

Rise in Local Criticality

Next, understanding conflict as never before, and motivated by the scale of damage and loss from crisis, local stakeholders pushed their own organizations to be accountable to changing global dynamics. In Charlottesville, several local actors played important roles in pushing local

institutions toward an anti-racist stand. Local activists identified across the study data include Wes Bellamy, Nikuyah Walker, Dede Smith, Lisa Woolfork, and Zyahna Bryant. City councilor Wes Bellamy was the only African American councilor at the time of the August, 2017 rally. Bellamy kept issues of institutional racism at the forefront of the local conversation in the crisis aftermath, insisting "We are not ready to heal yet" (Stockman, 2018). He continued to push the city government on the issue of statue removal, and advocated for other issues affecting Charlottesville's African American population such as affordable housing. According to one local paper, "Bellamy's legacy includes bringing up the city's difficult white supremacist history and present, a push for equity, a community presence, and an effort to connect people who've 'been left out by the system' to city resources" (Baars, 2019).

Another local advocate post-crisis, Nikuyah Walker became the first African American female to serve as mayor when Charlottesville elected her in November, 2017. Information taken from local media coverage, Walker titled her campaign "Unmasking the Illusion." She intended to tackle issues of systemic racism and economic inequality that the city's establishment had long sidelined. Walker's leadership has been characterized as disruptive. "She seems more focused on publicizing the city's sins than its successes," one journalist summarized (Stockman, 2018). For example, "Instead of squeezing a few dozen affordable housing units out of developers, she wanted to add thousands. Instead of merely providing 'implicit bias' training for police officers, she wanted an end to 'stop and frisk.'" Again, Walker gained standing as a local activist and leader in the crisis aftermath.

Other examples of local activism in the post-crisis period include Lisa Woolfork and Dede Smith. Woolfork is an assistant professor at the University of Virginia, a member of Black Lives Matter, and also a parent in the city school division. She has advocated for policy change

such as a Confederate flag ban. She has done so through groups like the Hate-Free Schools Coalition and Monument Justice Virginia (C-ville Writers, 2019; Knott, 2019d). Smith is a former vice mayor and former school board member. She has long advocated for school integration through rezoning, in the face of political opposition. Smith is quoted in the New York Times piece, "I don't think the schools see anything positive in an academic mixing pot because the White parents will leave." Notable three interviewed leader stakeholders suggested it was Smith's post-crisis outreach to the New York Times that hooked the periodical's interest in a story featuring Charlottesville City Schools.

Finally, Zyanah Bryant is another who raised local concerns in the post-crisis period. Bryant was a high school junior in 2017-2018. She long identified as a student activist and community organizer, having demonstrated following the murder of Treyvon Martin and again in the wake of the Charleston shooting. She founded the first Black Student Union at Charlottesville High School. In the wake of the August, 2017 events Bryant organized petitions, walk-outs, and a lecture series around local manifestations of racial injustice. In an interview with *Teaching Tolerance* published on the anniversary of Unite the Right Charlottesville, Bryant stated, "There are a lot of very deep problems that aren't evident on the surface when looking at Charlottesville, and that has been my goal - to continue to uncover and unmask those illusions." Evidently the August, 2017 event inspired these local stakeholders to critically examine their own institutions through a crisis-informed lens.

Global Audience for Local Concerns

Finally, given the broad reach of the original crisis event, these local activists found global audience for their concerns. For example, since August, 2017 Zyahna Bryant has been featured in the Washington Post, Forbes magazine, news networks CNN, and entertainment

network BET, among many other national forums. Virginia governor Ralph Northam appointed her to the state African American Advisory Board in September, 2019. Of course, Bryant's voice featured prominently in the New York Times exposé of Charlottesville City Schools in October, 2018. Nikuyah Walker has also become a global representative of Charlottesville and the issues of locality that are also ubiquitous to American society. Said Walker in a 2018 interview with CBS News' Face the Nation, "If you start talking about the issues we're facing around the country that relate to race and class, you can put Charlottesville up there as a city to study." These women are among several local advocates who raised their voices and found their message amplified in the post-crisis period. Superintendent Dr. Rosa Atkins recalled, "During that year was when we had many different protests that started to spring up and discontent about the status quo and wanting to change the status quo." Bryant summarized the impact of local criticality in a statement from the New York Times coverage, "There's a whole system you're up against. Every small victory cuts a whole in that system."

Summary

The data presented in this section draw predominantly from document analysis and treat both the global and the local response to the August, 2017 crisis event in Charlottesville. Together these data suggest a crisis event stokes a popular movement in its aftermath, a movement that reaches across different levels of society and involves criticism of the status quo. Specifically, the August, 2017 Unite the Right rally global crisis event was followed by a broad surge in criticality ultimately directed at local institutions such as the local public school organization.

Guilt by Fractalization: Local Responsibility for Global Dynamics

Found in Charlottesville, the period of criticality post-crisis yields a phenomenon of local reprobation. The researcher here labels this subcategory guilt by fractilization. A first concept suggested by the data is the ubiquity of crisis dynamics. Again, sociopolitical crisis is never an isolated event but rather the sudden revelation of a pervasive condition. It is precisely the omnipresence of a problem, the self-organized criticality around a conflict, that raises any given event to the level of crisis in the first place. Local dynamics foster global ones, just as global events reinforce local tensions - a kind of symbiosis. The local organization is part of and cannot be extracted from its fraught external landscape. Therefore, the example of Charlottesville suggests, any local organization contains some degree of causal responsibility for global crisis happenings.

Relevant to this finding is discussion of how critics identify evidence of local transgression. In Charlottesville, critics mined particular sources for proof of the school district's complicity in the sociopolitical crisis unfolding around it. Local conflict and tensions were evident in the various documentation of the organization's activities, such as in meeting minutes and media coverage. Policies and protocols contained the codification of the organization's outdated values compared to the post-crisis paradigm. Demographic data provided an objective accounting of social disparity. Measures of participation, outcomes, and equity across member groups revealed the organization's weaknesses and divisions. Finally, stakeholder testimonial added color and interest to the overall narrative.

Again, the Charlottesville case suggests global crisis dynamics exist at specific places within a local organization. Table 3 links allegations of The New York Times report to their source within Charlottesville City Schools, a kind of synthesis demonstrating where global crisis

dynamics live within the local organization. In Charlottesville, critics both local and global uncovered this evidence. They pushed to hold the organization accountable for its sociopolitical shortcomings in the post-crisis period.

Ubiquity of Crisis Dynamics

As previously established, crisis represents a global dynamic. The August, 2017 White supremacist rally was the sudden revelation of a ubiquitous conflict that happened to take place in Charlottesville but might have occurred in numerous other American communities. The event took place outside the school organization and was not specifically related to it. Far-right activists from across the country came, allegedly, to protest the removal of statues in Charlottesville. But practically, they came to demonstrate the strength of their resurgent power and values. The heart of the crisis was the witnessing of such a clear and large-scale display of racism in contemporary times. Global crisis dynamics also preside in local organizations and communities that together constitute the global landscape.

The local organization is a fractal of the global one. If not held directly responsible for the global crisis event, an organization is at least likely to be held accountable to evolving dynamics in the crisis aftermath. Whereas in fall 2017 Charlottesville City Schools felt itself a victim of crisis, by fall 2018 this organization found the public finger pointed squarely at it. A period of intense scrutiny revealed ample evidence of both personal and structural racism in the school district itself, guilt by fractilization, for which the organization had to answer. Emergent in the Charlottesville data, evidence of local complicity resided at particular places in the organization.

Local Evidence of Global Conflict

Historical Record. The evidence of local conflict resides in the locality's historical record. For example, Charlottesville's present conditions of racism and disparity reach back to the time of Jefferson, his conflicted embrace of both freedom and slavery. Jefferson relied on slave labor to sustain his home and construct his university. The continued demands of the University of Virginia have effectively organized this community into castes - a well-resourced White intellectual class and an under-resourced Black servant population. The socioeconomic and cultural divide between the two groups reached such an extreme that White Charlottesville engaged in massive resistance to school integration through the 1950s. In the 1960s, the city's purchase and demolition of the thriving Vinegar Hill neighborhood iconically destroyed modest gains in the socioeconomic status of its African American community (CLIHC, 2020). Integration has continued to be a point of contention; it has played out in a chronic debate over school zoning (Green & Waldman, 2018).

Interviewed stakeholders almost unanimously remarked on the racial and socioeconomic divisions as characteristic to this college town and its public schools. Said one leader stakeholder, "It's pretty typical of a university town where there are some very wealthy, very academic, very educated students who attend the schools. And then there are also students who live in considerable poverty. And you don't often see a lot in between." Said another teacher stakeholder, "It's the richest of the rich and the poorest of the poor." Another leader stakeholder offered this chronicle of the intersection of historical events, local and national, on the community's racial progress or lack thereof:

In Jefferson's time, there was slavery, there was great oppression, all of that. Once the

Civil War, Blacks started having more freedom and more educational opportunities and

more economic opportunities. You saw the economic levels of Blacks starting to

increase. Then came the twenties and the Depression and it dropped down. And there

were structures that were put in place to cause it to drop down. In Charlottesville on

Vinegar Hill, you saw the economic levels and the performance and the education levels

of Blacks going up. They were business owners, they were home owners. And then

came the Vinegar Hill incident in which most of that progress was wiped out and they

went back down. And since that time they have not come back up in Charlottesville…

And each one of those events has helped to keep the African American population in

Charlottesville oppressed. Which has happened all over the Commonwealth and the

country.

The comment suggests a history of discriminatory policies like resistance to integration and

racial covenants around real estate development negatively affected this community's African

American population over decades. The New York Times investigation found additional details

of school attendance and zoning practices intended to keep diverse students separate. A full

accounting of local activity over decades paints a bleak history of Charlottesville City Schools'

"Jim Crow Past" (Green & Waldman, 2018). The historical record substantiates this reframing

of the local narrative.

Policies and Procedures. Policies and procedures are other artifacts containing evidence

of organizational values anomalous to a changing paradigm post-crisis. Examples from

Charlottesville City Schools include policies around its Quest Gifted program and other

procedures that have supported academic tracking. These modern practices allowed de facto

racial segregation and exacerbated opportunity gaps between students of different races. Under

the Quest Gifted program, for example, a far disproportionate number of White students were

identified and received regular services in a pull-out setting (Smith, 2019). In fact "many White students were being pulled out, and not just Gifted students" reflected one leader stakeholder on the large-scale impact of the Quest program. This Gifted program's origin has since been linked with written evidence to White citizens' attempt to maintain separation of Black and White students at the time of integration in the late 1950s. The requirement of academic achievement and not only cognitive ability scores was a strategy for barring less formally prepared African American students from participation in the program. Reflected Superintendent Atkins in one interview, "Many school divisions start this in kindergarten… And it is so ingrained and so institutionalized in our schooling process that it is almost invisible." Again, the case data suggest evidence of institutional racism is found in an organization's long-standing policies.

Likewise, master-scheduling procedures influence schools' internal integration and the opportunities available to students. Charlottesville's schedules have at times allowed students to be placed in below grade-level classes or grouped homogeneously by reading ability, according to the superintendent. "Many of our students, marginalized students or from poverty, were in below-grade level courses as they tried to matriculate through high school," reflected a leader stakeholder on conditions that have more recently required "a great deal of tweaking." Academic tracking is complex and deeply intertwined with building logistics. For example, the scheduling of more rigorous math courses in elementary grades not only kept Charlottesville's diverse students apart but also kept lower-achieving students from the division's limited enrichment opportunities - and from a young age. "Walker (Upper Elementary School) was one of the schools in which that master schedule contributed to or actually prevented students from navigating to get courses that were very rigorous," reflected one teacher stakeholder. Tracked scheduling meant many minority students were unable to access the school's fine arts,

engineering, and foreign language courses. To note, since administrators have pursued de-leveling and the removal of such structural barriers post- October, 2018 these diverse students have flocked to the once restricted courses. For example, in the fall of 2019, the school board heard that for the first time that the middle school orchestra had demographically representative participation. "We needed a quarter of a million dollars in new instruments," shared one leader.

Without doubt, scheduling - that is tracking or leveling by other names - supported a de facto racial segregation in a richly diverse school district. Said one student stakeholder, "After maybe fourth grade, at a school that's like 40% Black, I was probably one of the only if maybe one of two and rarely one of three Black students or even generally students of color in any of my upper level AP and honors classes." In interviews board members, building leaders, and also teachers reflected on the reality and missed opportunity of Charlottesville's "two schools under one roof." For many it was no surprise, then, when students featured in the New York Times reporting shared this same concern.

Public Databases. Also, in the case of Charlottesville demographic data from publicly available sources provided objective accounting of sociopolitical division between the organization's constituent groups. Socioeconomic data alone implies racial disparity in the community. In one interview Superintendent Atkins reflected, "We have about 51% poverty in our school system. However, when you break that down by race, about 83% of our African American students are in poverty." More, "When you look at housing, the vast majority - I'm not sure the percentage, I know it's in the 80s, maybe 90s - of our African Americans in Charlottesville live in public housing." The researcher's own review of socioeconomic data for the city of Charlottesville supported the Superintendent's assertions. The Virginia Department

of Education, the Charlottesville Department of Social Services, and the Charlottesville Low-Income Housing Coalition provided relevant statistics.

School achievement data also demonstrated the racial disparity of academic opportunities and outcomes. White students outperform Black students on standardized tests, and the district's racial achievement gap exceeds the national average of two grade levels:

> Since 2005, the academic gulf between White and Black students in Charlottesville has widened in nearly all subjects, including reading, writing, history and science. As of last year, half of all Black students in Charlottesville could not read at grade level, compared with only a tenth of White students, according to state data. Black students in Charlottesville lag on average about three and a half grades behind their White peers in reading and math, compared with a national gap of about two grades.

The New York Times provided and the researcher's own investigation confirmed these statistics taken from the Times piece.

 Superintendent Atkins challenges these data, asserting that an ever-changing state assessment program paints an unfair and deficit picture around African American student potential. In her interview with the New York Times and also with the researcher Atkins pointed her district's efforts to close an extreme "opportunity gap." "'I'm not trying to make excuses,' for the test scores of Black students," the New York Times quoted Atkins, "But that's only one measure of where they are, and who they are, and their capabilities for success." Atkins honors measures of academic growth and celebrates a dramatic fall in the drop-out rate for minority students over the course of her tenure. Charlottesville's on-time graduation rate for African-American students is now on-par with the district's high 96% overall.

However, in their 2018 exposé the New York Times leveraged this statistical data to make a hard case that the school division's efforts at social justice have fallen short. The reporters drew upon socioeconomic data, state performance data, and federal civil rights data to establish Charlottesville's over-representation of African American students' in school discipline and under-representation in Advanced Placement and enrichment courses. From the article,

> Today, white students make up 40 percent of Charlottesville's enrollment, and African-American students about a third. But White children are about four times as likely to be in Charlottesville's gifted program, while Black students are more than four times as likely to be held back a grade and almost five times as likely to be suspended from school.

Again the newspaper used this statistical data to effectively underscore its conclusion that institutional racism negatively affects minority students in Charlottesville today.

Student / Stakeholder Testimonial. Finally community members' personal accounts add interest and urgency to the post-crisis investigation of a local organization. In Charlottesville, the New York Times put the story of Zyahna Bryant and friend Trinity Hughes at the heart of its reporting. Through their personal narratives, Bryant and Hughes appeared to represent the experience of other minority race students. Their stories evoked much emotion - anger, sadness, and shame - in the local readership. One student's statement reflected the importance of Zyahna's contribution to the exposé overall. "In my opinion, the school division was always very slow to respond... And I think Zyahna - what she said and what she was doing in the community - had a really large outsize impact." Said another student stakeholder, "I think the article was her doing. And I think the article had a large impact." Though no data suggests

the article was Zyahna's "doing," clearly her personal testimonial constituted compelling evidence of the organization's shortcomings with respect to racial justice and equity.

Summary

The case data suggest this subfinding, that the local organization will be found responsible for perpetuating global crisis dynamics. During the post-crisis surge of criticality, local critics and global critics combined forces for the New York Times' 2018 exposé of the Charlottesville City Schools organization. In this self-professed diverse and progressive school district, "a Bastion of Southern progressivism," the Times reported ample evidence of injustice and oppression. They printed their conclusions on the front page of one of the nation's most circulated newspapers, and so launched a secondary crisis within this organization. "Are you familiar with the New York Times article?" a teacher stakeholder asked the researcher, "Now that one did more damage to the school division than August 12th." Said another leader stakeholder, "It came down to that New York Times article, the one that said Charlottesville City Schools you are racist." Reflected another teacher, "There are some people who were infuriated by it, and others like 'Yeah someone finally said it.' But if so many people feel so many discordant things, then obviously the status quo isn't functioning for everybody." All but one interviewed stakeholder breached the topic of the New York Times article with the researcher. They shared of the disruption and hurt caused by such a bleak accounting of their public school community.

Whereas this organization spent the 2017-2018 school year espousing a unified front against racism in the wake of crisis, in 2018-2019 Charlottesville City Schools found itself rendered guilty of the same offense in the court of public opinion. In the words of one student,

I think mainly what happened is the Alt Right rally kind of brought people to actually

examine the problems in the city. And then things that were already issues kind of came

out, right? Like the achievement gap stuff had been happening for decades. But because

there is so much public attention on Charlottesville, all of a sudden there is now data and

this is something we look into and care about.

Then Charlottesville City Schools provides an example of guilt by fractalization, the

condemnation of an organization that occurred after an initial crisis event caused a surge in

criticality both global and local.

Table 4 New York Times' Identification of School-Level Injustices

Concern	*Detail*	*Source*
Segregative Zoning	Racially congregated elementary schools	Historical Record: • periodical archives • court rulings • school board records
Segregative Tracking	White students grouped in advanced and enrichment courses, Black students in lower level classes	Policies and Procedures: • school board policy • course registration procedures • master schedule • service and program offerings / access
Racial Achievement Gap	Disparity in performance on state standardized tests Disparity in reading levels Disparity in graduation rates	Public Databases: • VDOE school quality profiles • USDOE Civil Rights Data Collection
Disproportionate Discipline	Over-representation of Black students in suspensions	Public Databases: • VDOE school quality

		profiles • USDOE Civil Rights Data Collection
Gifted Enrichment Programming	Over-representation of White students identified / participating Services delivered in pull-out format, de facto segregation	Public Databases: • VDOE program participation data • USDOE Civil Rights Data Collection
Access to Rigour	Under-representation of Black students in Advanced Placement classes Under-representation of Black students receiving Advanced diplomas Course access tied to teacher Recommendations	Public Databases: • VDOE program participation data • USDOE Civil Rights Data Collection
Teacher Expectations	Low expectations for Black student potential, experienced with respect to course and college recommendations	Student / Stakeholder Testimonial

Calculated Intervention: Trauma Response versus Organizational Learning

The major phenomenon presented across these subcategories is an organization's changing relationship to crisis changes over time. The Charlottesville case suggests effective crisis leadership likewise changes over the course of crisis unfolding. Charlottesville City Schools' original relationship to the August, 2017 crisis event was as to acute trauma. Months later in the secondary stage, this same organization was targeted for perpetuating the crisis dynamics. The needs of the organization at the initial stage were different from those in the secondary stage. The Charlottesville superintendent effectively led the organization through both phases of crisis, employing different strategies at each. The case suggests effective crisis leadership understands changing demands on the organization in the crisis aftermath, and

responds with accordingly calculated intervention. The following analysis describes effective leadership strategies at each stage, as suggested by the case data. Table 4 summarizes these subfindings.

Initial Crisis: Trauma Response

Superintendent Atkins responded to the August, 2017 Unite the Right events as to acute trauma. Stakeholders of her organization were shocked, scared, even hurt. At this point in time the Superintendent sustained the life of the organization by stabilizing it. Specifically, Atkins unified the organization by elevating familiar, shared values. She healed her people with emotional support - messages of condolence and hope. She protected normal operations by increasing safety and security. In effect, the Superintendent pursued a return to order. The case data suggest these strategies are effective for leading an organization in the phase one experience of crisis as trauma.

Values Communication. First, Atkins communicated the organization's response to the crisis event in terms of values and expectations. She did so with such skill that her message was both widely and profoundly received. Her first crisis communication came on the crisis Sunday, a letter sent to the broad stakeholder community including faculty and staff, parents and local media. She collaborated on the letter with partner school division Albemarle County, leaning into a deep friendship with Albemarle superintendent Dr. Pam Moran. Atkins and Moran felt solidarity of voice projected strength and resolve, while protecting both organizations from any political fallout. "While the two systems had some things that we did differently, we tried to stay on the same page in terms of our philosophy and how we approached our response," reflected one leader stakeholder, "We wanted to be sure that we communicated across our two communities and with one voice." The superintendents wrote of their sadness and mourning.

They denounced racism and hate. They pledged their organization's ongoing commitment to American ideals to "establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity." They pushed this letter efficiently and directly to faculty, staff, and parents.

More, on the afternoon of Monday the 14th Atkins used the division-wide convocation of faculty to more personally communicate her response to the event. A clear example of calculated intervention, Atkins chose to change the focus and format of the convocation. In a meeting that morning, leader stakeholders encouraged her away from long-planned pomp and celebration. In a matter of hours the event was transformed to support a stressed and grieving community. Lights were dimmed. Glowing hearts honored lives lost over the weekend. The Superintendent, in blue jeans and without a podium, took the stage with vulnerability and emotion. She told her people of her own fresh feelings of shock and resolve. She told the stakeholders their organization would stand for love, and anyone unprepared to embrace diversity had no role to play in it. Teachers held each other while leadership led them in song. A great weight was lifted. There was pride for their organization, and trust for leadership.

Interviewed stakeholders remember this moment with clarity and importance. "I remember what she said," recalled a teacher. Per one leader stakeholder, "It was great at making us feel good and feel united and feel like a team." Said another teacher stakeholder,

> She made some very direct statements that if you were racist, if you are anti- certain
> religions, if you were anti- people who speak certain languages, if you are against
> LGBTQ, then you were not welcome in our school system. Because that's not who we
> are. And I remember her saying that very directly and I thought, well good for her.

Thanks for saying that because it does need to be said. We can't be the educators in our school system if we aren't united on that front.

Again, Atkins used the district-wide convocation event to bring unity around core values of the organization in the immediate crisis aftermath.

Emotional Support. Through the convocation event Atkins offered not only values but also emotional support. A leader stakeholder remembers a conversation immediately prior between Atkins and the auditorium manager. "When she got there the auditorium manager he was like 'No you can't have the podium.' She was like, 'I need the podium because I have to hold on.' He was like, 'No you can't. You can't separate yourself from the audience.' And she said okay." A teacher recalled, "I remember the way it felt and it was goosebumpy. And I remember that people were there supporting each other and it was we will not be defined by this moment. But we also need to heal." Said another leader stakeholder, "She walked across and she made the healing begin." Said another leader, "We cried together. We sang together. It was such an important moment of everybody coming together." The leader facilitated communal mourning, including displays of comfort and hope. One teacher reflected that because the year began this way, with vulnerability and a supportive community, teachers were able to express their stress and exhaustion as the difficult year continued. That stakeholders felt appreciation and approval for their leader for her support at this time is evident in one teacher comment, "It was her finest hour."

Having addressed the emotional needs of faculty, she turned attention toward students. At her direction, the division compiled and shared a collection of resources for families. Teams of counselors, both school counselors and clinical professionals, established open clinics in the first days of school. Leadership encouraged teachers to talk with students, particularly with

secondary students, about their experience and feelings. Per one student stakeholder, "I remember first day of school on the morning announcements, maybe like the first thing was that counselors and teachers and people will be in the library during lunch or any time and we encourage you to come talk to us… That was very much in our face. We knew those resources were available." On prominent walls administrators displayed hundreds of letters of encouragement received from concerned students around the country. In September, the high school gathered for a healing event not so different from the faculty convocation. A Nashville student group collaborated with the Charlottesville High School choir on an inciting performance of Bebe Winans' Right Now (We Need One Another). Generally, students moved through the 2017-18 school year with a sense of victimization and also a sense of unity. Per one leader, "We had t-shirts made that said 'We Are Charlottesville.' You know, we had the purple ribbon for Heather Heier painted on our football helmets. It was really more of a community coming together." Reflected another student on the school district response, "Initially I think the first response was really good… They did all the checkboxes that they had to do. That if they had not done, I would have been quite disappointed in the school for not doing that." Another student's statement provides summary, "I think it was all really positive. But I don't think it was like, you know, transformational."

Safety Prioritization. Superintendent Atkins made several decisions regarding the safety of stakeholders in the immediate aftermath of the August demonstrations. Freshman orientation would proceed on Monday, August 14th. Teachers and administrators were anxious to connect with students, also to pull them away from the scene on the street. Atkins moved a family welcome event from the downtown amphitheater to a more remote location. The division arranged additional security monitoring for school buildings at night for the protection of

custodial staff. Atkins rejected requests by political groups and media factions to use the school facilities, establishing an effective fortress around the organization. "She didn't want to allow our schools to be used by anyone… to help protect teachers and not get political," recalled one leader. "There was a lot with the high school," said another, "Like they were trying to take care of their night crew and they had freshmen coming in and they had students who were actually participating in the protests..."   Asked about Atkins' priorities, one leader stakeholder reflected "Sometimes I think that goes sort of without saying that people would think of safety first… But with everything that went down in August of 2017 she always took student and faculty safety as paramount." According to stakeholders' recollections the Superintendent's prioritization of their physical safety was another significant aspect of her crisis response at this stage.

A student said the school division's response to August, 2017 checked all the boxes. Important aspects of a school crisis response protocol were not overlooked. Students had access to counselors. The buildings felt like safe havens. Faculty felt unified and motivated to pursue their work, trusting the intentions of administration. This crisis response effort was not without opportunity for improvement. For example, the Superintendent might have delivered her values messaging more directly to students. More support staffers might have participated in the pinnacle convocation event. There might have been opportunities to continue the collective healing. But as stakeholders reflected on Atkins' management of the violent Unite the Right rally, they did find it successful. "I'm sure there were some mistakes, but I can't imagine us doing it any other way," summarized one leader stakeholder. Through the experience of a great trauma, their organization did not let them down. Notably, the Superintendent's response to trauma was altogether different from her response to the causal crisis that culminated a year following.

Table 5 Calculated Crisis Management: Trauma Response versus Organizational Learning

_____

Initial Crisis - Trauma Response	
Values Articulation	Crisis response letter, jointly issued Welcome back letter, division leadership Teacher convocation, superintendent speech
Emotional Support	Teacher convocation, faculty communal healing Counseling supports, individual student healing Classroom conversations, small-group student healing High school assemblies, student communal healing Parent resource offering, home support
Safety Prioritization	Freshman orientation, 8/14 (held) Welcome back reception (moved) Request for outside use of facilities (denied) Additional police surveillance (added)
Secondary Crisis - Organizational Learning	
Democratic Processes	Article Response Forums (2) Diversity Outreach Forums (15+) Student Petitions and Protests (Black Student Union, LatinX) Division-Wide Committee (33 Diverse Stakeholders) School-Based Committees (Report to Division Committee) Ongoing Community Forums (2019-2020)
Historical Auditing	Commemoration of Massive Resistance and Charlottesville 12 / Trailblazers "Changing the Narrative" History Curriculum Redesign Ms. Smith Gifted Letter (1958)

Secondary Crisis: Organizational Learning

As seen in Charlottesville, the needs of an organization change with the arrival of the

secondary crisis of accountability. The secondary crisis targets the organization's status quo,

throwing the traditional order into question. At this point the organization's survival requires not stabilization, but rather transformation. Effective leadership at this stage has much to do with the advancement of organizational learning which is requisite to transformation. In this secondary phase, Charlottesville's Atkins pursued organizational learning through calculated strategies of democratic processes and historical auditing.

Democratic Processes. First, democratic processes allow the leader of an organization to collect and consolidate the swell of critical sentiment post-crisis. Atkins used democratic processes to amplify the voices of minoritized and traditionally marginalized stakeholders. Specifically the Charlottesville superintendent hosted forums, convened committees, and embraced student advocacy.

Upon the publication of the New York Times article, Atkins planned a series of open forums. At the first forum, she pronounced her acceptance of the article's claims. Division leadership then invited the hundreds of participants to share their thoughts in focus groups. "We put it on chart paper," Atkins recalled, "We had facilitators. We were very intentional on how we structured that forum." That first event lasted nearly three hours. Division leadership recorded and published the feedback, then hosted a second forum for sorting and prioritizing. At the second forum, attendees considered 32 points of response and created a ranked list of ten action items. From there the division took its outreach on the road. Leadership completed a series of more than 15 public forums held at community centers across the division's full geography over the course of three months. The forums were well advertised and well attended. "How do you work a room of several hundred people who are all pissed off at you? How do you navigate that conversation week after week with people coming to school board meetings and hollering at you about how everything's working?" Reflected one building administrator, "And I

think Dr. Atkins does it with a steady hand, with a calm hand… She was able to put her armor on and go take care of business."

Atkins also embraced democratic activity at the student level. When minority student groups developed lists of demands and submitted petitions, when they organized walkouts, the Superintendent allowed these demonstrations and incorporated their demands.

Then after months of public listening, the collection of concerns and priorities, the Superintendent convened a division-level equity committee to formally process the public feedback and issue recommendations. According to a meeting minutes recorded in March, 2019,

> The committee is comprised of teachers, staff, parents, School Board members, the Mayor, City employees, and community partners with members often wearing multiple 'hats' of 'parent and employee' or 'community partner and alumna.' City of Charlottesville Youth Opportunity Coordinator Daniel Fairley co-led the Charlottesville Youth Council's facilitation of student feedback from CHS and Buford; he along with CHS Principal Dr. Eric Irizarry agreed to serve as a liaisons to the Charlottesville Youth Council and other student groups so that student voice would also be represented.

This group of 33 stakeholders went on to produce an ordered list of recommendations that have been incorporated into the division's strategic plan. The recommendations became top priority as the organization entered school year 2019-2020. Meanwhile, a program of public outreach has continued. Equity committees now operate at each school. Concerns voiced at all levels are carried forward to the division-level group. "I think that is a big improvement," reflected one teacher stakeholder, "Where people feel like not only can I have a voice, but there's a structure to carry that voice." Said a leader stakeholder, "I think now we've evolved from an event to a

process, or as I would say from an event into a system where it's repeatable and sustainable, we're starting to create an infrastructure for it. And I think that's how it will keep on going."

Historical Auditing. Second, historical auditing is a strategy the superintendent has intentionally employed to involve her own membership in the uncovering of inconsistencies between the organization's traditional order and the post-crisis paradigm. Atkins has advanced her organization's understanding of local history around massive resistance to school integration. She has pushed the district's social studies department to "change the narrative" by teaching local history around race and justice. She has also publicized historical artifacts affirming the racist origins of the school district's Gifted program. Through critical examination of her organization's history, Atkins has shaped consciousness and established rationale for transformative efforts.

Trailblazers History. Since October, 2018 Atkins has actively pursued Charlottesville's local history of massive resistance to school integration including the courageous stories of the first students to integrate. The locality's choice to close public schools rather than racially integrate following Brown v. Board of Education is a fact that intensely represents the disadvantage its minority children have faced. The history is also full of hope as the integrating students, the Charlottesville 12, have offered a legacy of grace, courage, and success. Apparent in her last years of social media postings, Atkins has lost no opportunity to celebrate and teach about the experience of the Charlottesville 12. She has ceremoniously issued diplomas once denied these students (Richardson, 2013). She has placed historical markers at their schools (Knott, 2019b). Remarkably, Atkins created an annual day of appreciation and reckoning in honor of the twelve (Knott, 2019c). The first annual "Trailblazers Day" was celebrated across the division on November 21, 2019. A division post to social media read, "Today we honor

those who desegregated Charlottesville schools. Every year in November on this date, we will teach our students about this important local history and commemorate the integration of Charlottesville City Schools." The posting, and others like it, linked to a timeline of the local integration history. Reflected one community stakeholder,

> They did a dedication of a sign this fall, like when the school was integrated, and the kids all went to the assembly. And so my daughter came home talking about how so-and-so in her class would not have been allowed to go to that school because they were Black and they thought that Black people were not as good as White people, but now they can all go to the same school and learn together. And this is kindergarten, and in my mind, these are really good and important conversations for kids to be having. But I think they are also hard conversations, right? So I was very pleased when she came home and was talking about the history of the school and things like that.

Then this campaign has influenced organizational culture even inside the classroom.

Changing the Narrative. Similarly, in school year 2019-2020 Charlottesville City Schools received and began implementation of a grant through Virginia Humanities called "Changing the Narrative." According to local news coverage and a description from the Virginia Humanities organization, the purpose of the grant is to "broaden and reframe narrative of Virginia's past by engaging local communities and youth in addressing the present-day challenges of racism and bias." The initiative has the full support of the Superintendent, evident in the division's dedication of teacher resources toward professional development and also in its social media posts relating teacher efforts to implement the new approach. For example, a district tweet from November 2019 reads, "Thanks to @zbullockteach & @jordyyager for

continuing to bring local history and current sociological issues to life for our

@CHSBlackKnights!" Reflected one district leader stakeholder,

> We have multiple local curriculums that are now being written and working through
>
> Changing the Narrative. This PL day, all teachers K through 12, will spend one half of
>
> their professional learning day at Ashlawn Highlands where they are going to be talking
>
> about the invisible voices and making sure those narratives are coming out. So we are
>
> trying to really have people analyze our history and be reflective from different
>
> perspectives.

In effect, the grant is a tool through which the Superintendent is actively supporting teacher and

student participation in critical pedagogy and organizational learning.

Gifted Letter. Finally, organizational learning and the shaping of consciousness around

equity priorities was advanced, too, by a joint discovery between Superintendent Atkins and

former teacher Maggie Thornton. Conducting doctoral research, Thornton found a 1958

concerned citizen letter among school board records. The letter promoted use of Gifted

identification protocols as a means of racial segregation. The citizen advocated that Gifted

identification should include not only cognitive ability but also academic achievement measures.

Few African American students would be prepared to qualify academically, suggested the

author. Gifted services could then be delivered in a pull-out setting for a de facto separation of

students along race lines. "For me reading that letter, it felt like and sounded like that was the

genesis of the Gifted program that we had evolved in Charlottesville City Schools," reflected

Atkins.

Atkins anticipated the significance of this artifact. She held several conversations with

colleagues and scholars around the letter, coming to understand it as evidence of institutional

racism. "I decided that I would not use it as a hammer, but as a tool for educating," Dr. Atkins affirmed. "And I decided in our community, in our school division, that I just could not rest until we dismantled this program." The Superintendent referred to the letter directly when, in spring 2019, she put a moratorium on the pull-out delivery of Gifted services. Her elevation of this historical artifact opened a new series of meetings and debate, evident in local press coverage. From the *Daily Progress* newspaper, "Atkins faced backlash for requesting $620,000 from the city out of the normal budgeting cycle to hire eight gifted specialists to strengthen changes to the program." The emotional resistance of some Gifted parents to the change evoked only stronger feelings of conviction in the leader and across the greater organization that all students deserved the academic enrichment opportunities Gifted programming provides. Fully committed to the transformation of her organization post-crisis, Atkins has used this product of historical auditing to advance organizational learning in the face of waning resistance post-crisis.

Summary

While Atkins embraced unity and stability immediately following the August, 2017 crisis event, she later pivoted her organization toward learning. Through calculated strategies of democratic processes and historical auditing Atkins substantiated and intensified the popular criticisms of her organization. She intentionally sought to generate cognitive dissonance during the secondary crisis stage. Ironically, Atkins facilitated the recovery of her organization by forcing organizational learning in this way. In the end, the leader used the strategies of organizational learning not only to survive a secondary crisis of accountability in the August, 2017 aftermath. But more, she used organizational learning to leverage crisis fallout toward the transformation and betterment of her organization. This category of leadership for crisis optimization is further explored and developed in the chapter's second findings section.

Leadership for Crisis Optimization: Surmounting a Crisis of Conscience

The second major finding of the study treats the phenomenon of crisis optimization. According to the literature, there exists an opportunity for organizations to benefit from crisis, yet few achieve this level of success. To optimize crisis requires organizational learning toward the transformation of the organization. Analysis of the Charlottesville data confirms this tenet, but suggests an important extension.

Found in the Charlottesville case, a pivotal factor precedes the organizational learning necessary for crisis optimization. That factor is leadership. Specifically, organizational learning hinges on the leader's response to an internal dilemma that presents in the secondary stage of local accountability. A leader must choose to accept or reject criticisms brought against the organization in this post-crisis period. Shown in the example of Dr. Rosa Atkins, the leader's acquiescence and recognition of shortcomings opens the door to organizational learning and the consequent transformation of the organization. Acceptance of responsibility is requisite to change. However, such acceptance involves risk and sacrifice on the part of the leader. She must relinquish a relationship to the status quo in which her authority is vested. Acceptance also involves abandonment of the leader's prior claims to professional accomplishment. Leadership for crisis optimization is scarce because the leader who is willing to accept responsibility is rare. Grappling with this crisis of conscience was central to the experience of Charlottesville's Atkins, whose ultimate submission facilitated sweeping changes in her organization.

The following analysis explores leadership attributes that support such an optimal response to the crisis of conscience. In Atkins' case, the leader's character, values, and power all contributed to her willingness to personally sacrifice for the benefit of the organization. For example, character traits that appeared to help the leader meet the internal dilemma included

caring and commitment. Values that seemed to motivate the leader's disposition included justice and equality. Finally, power resources such as expertise and relationships also figured in the leader's moral calculus. As the Charlottesville leader demonstrated, a multitude of life experiences supported her development of these attributes. The following analysis shows the influence of these attributes on the leader's response to the crisis of conscience that precedes organizational learning in the crisis aftermath. Synthesized, these Charlottesville case data demonstrate the capacity of extraordinary leadership to guide an organization through and beyond crisis.

Aspects of Character: Caring and Commitment

Character refers to personality traits and ways of interacting with the world that reflect one's personal morality. According to the data, certain aspects of character - caring and commitment - define the Charlottesville superintendent. These aspects derived from life experiences and they contributed to Atkins' decision-making throughout her career, including through the crisis of conscience she experienced in fall, 2018.

Caring Leadership

First, caring is a sincere expression of the leader's regard for the personal wellbeing of her stakeholders. This regard applies to all stakeholders of the organization, across differences of race, class, or position. Caring involves knowing, affirming, and challenging individuals. This quality of caring supported intimate connections between the leader and her full diversity of stakeholders. The leader's caring cultivated stakeholder loyalty strong enough to endure through difficult times. Caring primes the leader for an emotionally intelligent response to her stakeholders during crisis unfolding. In the case of Charlottesville, stakeholders were quick to share examples of the superintendent's caring. These examples clearly inspired their trust. A

less caring leader might struggle to convince stakeholders of her sincere regard for their

wellbeing over the course of difficult and challenging decisions required for crisis optimization.

In the example of Atkins, caring was evident in her effort to know and challenge

students. Over her career she always made a point to develop relationships with students in the

organization. As reported in Jirnaek's 2012 biographical portrait in Charlottesville's Daily

Progress newspaper, at any given time there were several students with whom Atkins engaged in

a kind of mentoring, meeting with them regularly, learning from them, and advocating for them.

Atkins reflected on the many personal relationships with students over the years, "We kept a big

family even though we only had one child." Affirmed one leader stakeholder, "One thing she has

done throughout the years is generated some kind of relationship with a student or group of

students for whatever reason and is following that student and offering support." Atkins also had

a tendency to inquire of every secondary student, upon meeting them, of their personal goals and

plans to pursue higher education. Supported by interview data, she was known for asking

students about their college and future plans. For example, one community stakeholder

reflected on Atkins' priorities, "I'm going to say she cares most about the kids. I can definitely

see that… I do hear her say to a child, what are you planning on doing when you graduate? Are

you going to college?" Another stakeholder reflected on Atkins celebration of students' talents.

She liked to have a child give an impromptu performance of music or language or sport. For

example, "(Student) was a second grader who she had stand on a chair and sing for us. He sang

to us and did a wonderful job. She followed him for years after that." Stakeholders

unequivocally reflected on Atkins' demonstration of caring for the needs and success of every

child.

She directed a similar mix of love and expectations to faculty and staff. One leader shared of Atkins' investment in her own career, "For me personally she has been just so critical to pushing me to do next things." This stakeholder went on, "Like any good parent, she's been both an encourager and a cheerleader and also is willing to kind of really light a fire under you if you need it." Another leader spoke of the caring he perceives,

> When I see her, we hug one another. She's genuine. She's positive. Which isn't to say she's not critical, because she can be critical. But she's warm. She's endearing. She asks about my kids. She knows my family. She knows my wife.

This leader stakeholder suggested Atkins had "blossomed into a people person" over time and to her strength and that of the organization. One teacher stakeholder shared of the respect she perceives from Atkins,

> I've been happy with her because I've always felt like she respects me. We don't always agree on everything. But I've also never felt super strongly about something that I didn't go talk to her and she didn't say, 'Okay, go, do.'

These data suggest Atkins' expressions of caring for faculty and staff have inspired mutual trust and loyalty to the leader, and sustained stakeholder support for the leader over time.

That is to say, Atkins' demonstration of caring has translated to political gain. Stakeholders affirm that through warmth and sincerity Atkins has bolstered her ability to engage and relate with the full diversity of stakeholders of the organization. "She can talk to the state superintendent but she also can talk just as easy to a second grader or to the janitor or to the teacher, the principal," reflected a leader stakeholder. One leader called the characteristic Atkins' "maternal instinct." Shared this stakeholder,

I hear it from parents - from single African American female mothers that call me up, as well as mothers in the Greenbriar neighborhood who don't have to work that tells me 'I really like Rosa. She is really good.' And I also know that some people don't like or support her. But what's constant that I hear is that of her demeanor. She really puts me at ease and I really think that's her maternal instinct that does that.

Referencing Atkins' contribution to a recent City Council debate, a different leader stakeholder summarized, "She's very good at entertaining different perspectives and being able to talk through lots of different situations." Clearly emotional intelligence and communication skills support Atkins' effective demonstration of caring for stakeholders. This quality of caring has ultimately contributed to her strength in her position. Atkins' caring has generated stakeholder loyalty, which has supported her through the period of post-crisis adversity.

Committed Leadership

Commitment is another essential character trait that moves a leader to resolve the crisis of conscience to the benefit of the organization, suggested by the Charlottesville case. Commitment involves a willingness to pursue one's values in the face of adversity. Commitment also reflects a sense of personal responsibility for the experience of others. For her committed character, Atkins chose to remain with her organization through a time of great challenge and upheaval post-crisis. Stakeholders agree the organization benefited from her stable leadership. The following paragraphs recount first the source and then the impact of her commitment as found in the data.

The case data revealed commitment was fundamental to the Superintendent's character, illustrated in examples from her life story. Atkins recognized commitment and resiliency as

central to her character. She identified the source of these attributes as her family's teachings around the challenge and responsibility of being a Black person in America. Atkins reflected,

> As a Black woman, as a Black person, our mothers and our fathers and our relatives always taught us perseverance is important. You have to get up, and keep going. Don't allow anything to stop you as you are moving forward. As Black people, you will be knocked down. You will be pushed. You will be shoved. But a part of what you must do is get up and keep moving. So that has been a part of our life, since we were very small.

Particularly, Atkins' mother communicated this message to her children. "The words of my mother, 'You've got to do it. You can't give up.' Those are words that I heard most of my life," shared the Superintendent. More,

> My mother actually is the strength beneath my wings. She passed away since I've been superintendent in Charlottesville. But one of her parting words to me was that I could never stop, that I had to keep going. So that has certainly been a great influence for me.

Atkins' reflections suggest that in grappling with the crisis of conscience that followed the 2017 White supremacist rally she relied on this intimately derived sense of commitment to guide her path forward.

Notably, time of service in the Army Reserve supported a deeper incorporation of this sense of commitment in Atkins' character. Atkins' military service was a fulfilling part of her life. It provided an experience of shared organizational mission and team member loyalty. She shared,

> One of the things that you are taught in the Reserves or in the military is that you don't leave your post. No matter how difficult the war becomes, you do not leave your post.

That's your assignment. That's what you have signed up to do. And you stay there until

you are relieved of your duties. You don't leave your duties.

Unequivocally, said Atkins, this military training has informed her approach to school

leadership.

Again, her high level of commitment compelled her to persist as superintendent of

Charlottesville City Schools through the secondary crisis of organization. Atkins' faced a rise in

criticism of the self and organization that focalized in fall, 2018. "There was a lot of soul

searching that had to happen, as to where was my place as the leader in the school division," she

shared, "I think that any perseverance, or any development of a character of perseverance, came

to bear at this time." Ultimately she chose to remain with the division unless relieved of her

responsibility, in alignment with these lifelong teachings that had become essential to her

character.

Atkins' delay of retirement reveals the extent of this commitment. "Very few people

know I had actually announced in March, 2018 prior to the article coming out that I was going to

let the 18-19 school year be my last year. I was going to retire," shared Atkins in one interview.

Reflected a leader stakeholder, "She was really ready to retire. You know, Rosa was ready,

ready to retire." But following the New York Times article, Atkins chose to delay retirement.

Said one leader,

The reality is she decided to stick with it, because she felt that she, for the first time

since she came to Charlottesville, had a chance to make changes in things that were

going to benefit kids from an equity and social justice perspective.

Ultimately, Atkins remained committed to Charlottesville City Schools out of a sense of personal

responsibility for the state of the organization in crisis and also for a sense of loyalty to mission.

As to the impact of Atkins' commitment, data suggest it provided the organization with a sense of momentum and mission focus even in the midst of chaos and overhaul. "She has been consistent here for a long time," said one leader stakeholder, "And I think that is key. Stability and leadership is key to making things work, especially if it's good leadership." Said another leader, "The highlight would be just her unwavering calmness and leadership through some very, several very difficult times. That's something that really is going to stand out to me." Shared one teacher,

> Dr. Atkins definitely brought a sense of stability. And her commitment to stay was a big part of that. And her commitment to lead and be in conversations was really a big part of feeling safe again in a school system that wasn't just going to be in upheaval constantly. So I think that was really positive.

Clearly stakeholders saw and understood Atkins' persistence as a demonstration of loyalty to themselves and their shared mission. The data showed stakeholders were willing to follow such a dedicated leader as she advanced new objectives such as organizational learning and structural changes to the organization.

In short, said stakeholders, Atkins' consistency served as compass and pointed a clear direction through fraught terrain. Her example implies the importance of leader commitment to the phenomenon of crisis optimization overall. At the same time, "She's been around awhile," said another leader stakeholder, "So people don't give her the benefit of the doubt that she might be a woman on fire for change." This statement points toward another attribute of leadership for crisis optimization, that is values and specifically the leader's reprioritization of justice and equality in the post-crisis period.

Leader Values: Justice and Equality

Atkins' example showed how an effective crisis leader functions from a values system that upholds justice and equality. These values imply a belief in the equal worth of all persons and their consequent right to participate in society and compete for its rewards. Belief in justice and equality takes place along a dimension. A full embrace of these values involves the alignment of not just words, but also thoughts, and ultimately actions. At its greatest extent, justice involves a willingness to surrender personal privilege on behalf of fairness and equal opportunity for others. When the leader models these priorities, she raises the bar for stakeholders and further commits her organization to their pursuit.

Atkins' example suggests life experiences shaped not only her beliefs but also the strengths of her convictions. Several specific factors emerged prominently in Atkins' reflections. Personal experiences of racism and discimination fostered the values of justice and equality in this leader. Role models, both direct and indirect, also motivated her commitment to these beliefs. These values of justice and equality Atkins learned, nurtured, and practiced over the course of her career and lifetime. Notably the crisis event of 2017, the White supremacist rallies, was a formative occasion that propelled Atkins toward stronger, more active embrace of these core values.

Atkins developed an awareness of injustice early on, witnessing the denial of education to her neighbor, a severe needs child. "Of course during that time there wasn't a place in school for students who had special needs," she remembered, "So I would hold school on my front porch. He would come over and he was my only student, other than my dolls." Young Atkins developed compassion for this child and wanted to support his needs. The experience influenced her later decision to become a special education teacher.

Atkins shared, she also understood racism at a young age. She grew up in starkly

segregated Emporia, Virginia, in the 1950s. The setting was positive, if humble. The African

American community was emergent. Education was a possibility denied her parents and

grandparents who worked as sharecroppers and manual laborers. Black teachers were role

models. Atkins remembers her parents' efforts to keep their children away from racist attitudes

in the outside world. There was a time when her doll was taken by a White child and young

Rosa's grandmother pulled her quickly away from the encounter. To entangle would only delay

the family's progress. But to the child, the unfairness was poignant.

Again her mother made a lasting impression on Atkins, the superintendent reflected.

Young Rosa felt her mother's dedication to racial progress. She remembers a time when her

mother took her and her sister to the dime store lunch counter, newly integrated. Her mother

ordered a sandwich for the girls to share. They ate, paid, and rose to leave. Her mother said no

other word. Atkins reflected,

> It wasn't until many years later that I realized what my mother was doing for us. It was so
>
> symbolic to her to demonstrate to her girls that you belong here. This counter is now
>
> open. You may sit here. You may now take charge of this space.

From her mother, Atkins learned to approach social justice with subtlety, allowing actions to

build roads where words too often put up walls. Atkins shared she never considered herself an

activist. But she always sought to honor her own potential and to seek justice and equality

through her actions. Reflected Atkins on her approach to social justice over the majority of her

career, "You don't have to be loud about what you are doing, you don't have to announce it," she

said, "But you do have to operate in that space. It's not as much about what you say as what you

do." Her choice of a career in education was both a personal triumph over racial discrimination and an opportunity to shape a more just world.

Data show Atkins always valued justice with her work, but differently over time. In the beginning she pursued justice through mainstream channels already available to her. She sought to improve educational outcomes for minoritized students by closing the achievement gap. She worked toward higher quality instruction through curriculum alignment, professional development, and data analysis. In time, however, she came to feel the mainstream measures of academic success disadvantaged minoritized and marginalized children by projecting a deficit model. Atkins noted a change in outlook inspired by the presidency of Barack Obama. In the years following Obama's ascendency, Atkins sought to shift her approach toward asset recognition. "Once President Obama was elected," shared Atkins, "I think a new era started in education. An era of freedom." Atkins felt less pressure for African American students to fit into a mainstream expectation or mold. "By arriving in the White House we arrived, in some sense… And we were able to speak out. And we were able to be Black people and feel as if we were valued." Atkins moved the division away from the narrow focus on assessment outcomes and toward an appreciation of whole-child development.

Finally, the White supremacist demonstrations of August, 2017 brought Atkins to feel her community's need for justice in a new way, with greater urgency and less apology. Equity was always her goal, but she now understood it as the required next step. In one interview, Atkins reflected,

> Before August, 2017, I would have just completely denied any social justice part of me. I
> don't know that I knew that about myself. Perseverance, all of those things, yes. But it

wasn't until I saw people marching through the streets. Until I actually witnessed what

my parents went through during the civil rights movement...

A teacher stakeholder remembered Atkins statement to this point, made at the August 14, 2017

convocation,

She said she had really thought a lot about equity in her head, but it hadn't hit her in her

heart… and that it was important that now it hit her in her heart, in order to help make

change happen in the school system.

Emphasizing the passion around values in Atkins' post-crisis leadership, one leader shared,

The stuff she's had to say about race, the stuff she's had to say about trauma, about the

need for equity. Like she has gained a voice in a way that I just want - it just makes me

want to be like "wow." To all the people out there in the country, I just want to play her

speech and be like, don't you get it? Like she has got the voice now, in this way that it's

remarkable to watch her. And I take great pride in being able to go to her as my

superintendent.

Ultimately, Atkins' elevation of justice and equality have provided clear direction for her

organization. Seen in the data, many stakeholders have appreciated and followed Atkins' lead,

rededicating themselves to justice and equality as both the principal means and end in this time

post-crisis.

Power Resources: Expertise and Relationships

Crisis optimization through transformation of the organization requires a conscious

move away from the status quo. The data suggested the Superintendent's exercise of power

played a significant role in this transformational process. The power to transform an

organization post-crisis does not derive from explicit domains. That is, the leader cannot rely on

claims to positional authority or economic dominance to organize what is in effect a popular

revolution. Rather, the crisis optimizer applies knowledge resources and social resources to

support a shaping of consciousness and a mobilization of bias in her organization. Expertise is

one source of power for garnering trust and persuading stakeholders. Relationships are another

power source, offering moral support and a united front. Charlottesville's Atkins exercised these

power resources toward the consolidation of change post-crisis.

Expertise

Atkins' example suggests a crisis optimizer benefits from power in the form of expertise.

Expertise is command over information that is derived from personal experience, formal

education, and professional practice. The case suggests these stakeholders yielded to a leader

whose claim to knowledge exceeds their own. Atkins possessed great expertise, for her

intentional and lifelong pursuit of it. Importantly, she also possessed communication skills

required for sharing her knowledge. Particularly during the secondary crisis of organization,

Atkins used her expertise to shape the consciousness of stakeholders as she informed them of the

organization's past transgressions and charted future priorities. Expert knowledge allowed

Atkins to lead the process of organizational learning from a place of legitimacy and authority, so

protecting it from sociopolitical volatility. Her ability to understand and also articulate a position

to diverse stakeholders was essential for cultivating trust and building consensus in the

organization.

As to the source of her expertise, Atkins' developed it deliberately across a lifetime. One

source of expertise was formal education. Education, too, was an explicit family value. Atkins'

parents were not able to complete elementary school; they instructed their children to access

what they could not. Atkins recalled her mother's guidance, "Get all that you can get in

education, and continue on." That expectation "was a great influence" on her life. Atkins recalled a time when, as a new mother, she pursued two master's degrees simultaneously. Her school division had tapped her for administration, but she did not want to move forward without full credentialing as a teacher. "I was so dedicated to being a teacher," Atkins remembered, " I didn't want to be like those other administrators and just have a master's degree in administration." She earned both her master's degree in special education and in school administration in the summer of 1993. She later earned a doctorate, achieving the highest academic credential in her field.

Atkins' expertise also derived from a diverse professional experience. Before Charlottesville, she had served in highly resourced and highly effective Henrico County, also in socioeconomically challenged but passionate Richmond City, also in the small and rural community of Caroline County. Said one leader stakeholder,

> One of the first things that struck me is that Rosa really felt like somebody that had that
> sort of rock-like foundation in terms of stability and in terms of her experience in both
> large systems - in Henrico as well as in Richmond City - as well as in Caroline County.

Her depth of experience working with different kinds of communities and different groups of people really prepared Atkins for the small but diverse city of Charlottesville, suggested the data.

Of course, for who she is culturally - a person of African American and Native American heritage - Atkins' possesses expertise with respect to the experience of minoritized people. Reflected one leader,

> These situations where we have, you know, racist posts or August 12th, or White people
> that want to talk to her about race… It's different having a conversation with a Black
> female than it would be to have that conversation with a White superintendent.

Multiple stakeholders likewise suggested that Atkins' racial identity gave the superintendent

insight and credibility for responding to the particular sociopolitical challenges of the public

school superintendency.   Said one community stakeholder, "Take what you will, but I think her

race means something." Atkins has understood the perspectives and needs of the minority

stakeholders and has been sensitive to these - though for most of her tenure she did so with great

delicacy, taking care to honor traditional structures and to maintain order.

Multiple stakeholders reflected on the effect of Atkins' expertise. They said Atkins

demonstrates professional knowledge both broad and deep. She can speak as well to

instructional practice as to school finance, to child development as to building logistics. In the

words of one leader stakeholder,

> Something that stands out to me is her mastery of the curriculum and knowing the details
>
> of what's going on in the system. The budget, down to the last dollar. She would have
>
> the same level of knowledge as the budget director who, you know, that's their job to
>
> know that. But Rosa knows that just as well as they do. To know how to gather
>
> personnel together. For me all of that stands out... She knows what the hell she's talking
>
> about.

Atkins has utilized her expertise to establish partnerships, to advance initiatives, and to advance

organizational learning and change. Per one leader stakeholder, "She has been able to parlay that

knowledge into creating many community partnerships. She's mended a lot of fences that were

broken from previous administrations and expanded the things that we are able to do as a

district." Another stakeholder shared a recent examples of Atkins' expertise, her successful

negotiation with the local city council around funding:

I think there's some tension and conflict about funding. And just her ability to be able to go up there and present. She did a good job of explaining like the local composite index and how out of district students impact us… She always looks like she's on top of it.

Atkins has succeeded at communicating her understanding to stakeholders with less familiarity. In this way she has shaped stakeholder consciousness and brought many to share her point of view.

In the current time, Atkins continues to rely on her expert understanding of both education and race to communicate a change message to her stakeholders. In a letter published to all district stakeholders on May 31, 2020, Atkins and school board chair Jennifer McKeever wrote,

> We are unafraid and prepared to do unprecedented work to push back against hatred, discrimination, and violence until the misalignment of power and force are reigned in. Equity work in our schools and community demands that we look in the mirror and take further actions to ensure justice and better outcomes for Black students, staff, and families.

Again Atkins' expertise derived from formal education, extensive professional experience, and her own experience of minority race have afforded her political capital and the power to take bold action advancing organizational learning and change in the post-crisis period.

Relationships

Atkins' case also suggests relationships are an important source of power for a leader's pursuit of crisis optimization. Relationships sustain the leader on a personal level and also bring strength in numbers to her cause. Atkins developed strong relationships with many stakeholders over the course of her long tenure, relying more on power in this dimension over time.

Importantly, she enjoyed friendships with other powerful stakeholders. These relationships

sustained her personally through periods of immense pressure. They also brought about

professional opportunities. Particularly in times of turmoil, such as the crisis events of 2017 and

beyond, these relationships functioned as alliances, supplying the Superintendent with a bank of

support she could rely on. Her example suggests strong relationships across the organization and

especially with powerful stakeholders bolster a leader in her efforts toward crisis optimization.

The data suggest a "critical friendship" with the superintendent Dr. Pam Moran of

Albemarle County Public Schools was both personally sustaining and strategically advantageous

for Atkins. Moran assumed the Albemarle superintendency in 2005, and Atkins in 2006. The

two leaders made an intimate connection upon Atkins' arrival, recognizing on their first meeting

that they shared a birthday. Reflected Atkins in a 2012 Daily Progress article profiling the two

leaders, "It is very nice having Pam next door. She is not only a female that faces some of the

same issues I face - some we laugh about and some we gnash our teeth over - but a friend and

supportive colleague." The leader colleagues shared a belief that students should be the center of

their decision-making. Though they did not always agree, they were often able to subdue

political divisions across their constituencies by presenting a united front. For example, the

superintendents collaborated to bring advanced science and technology programs to their

divisions, also the AVID college preparatory program serving under-privileged students. In the

wake of the August, 2017 White supremacist rally they intentionally communicated with one

voice to their joint stakeholders, "The memory of this weekend's events should survive as a

community that responded forcefully in overcoming the darkest impulses of those who traffic in

hatred, intolerance and brute force." Though Atkins felt very much alone as the secondary crisis

came to her organization in 2018, she continued to receive the moral support of colleague and friend Dr. Pam Moran.

Another example of powerful relationships, Atkins enjoys close relations with her board members. These connections are the product of years of collaboration around shared objectives. For example, several current members joined the school board in 2006 immediately following Atkins' selection to the superintendency. At this point in time they have worked together with Atkins for more than 14 years. Generally speaking, Atkins and her board members are "big fans" of one another. Reflected one teacher stakeholder on the loyalty shown by the board,

> You've seen in so many other divisions where you have a board that could be completely dysfunctional internally. So yeah, when you're on a good track then a very supportive board is a good thing… I think at this point they (board members) are pretty much reactive to what Dr. Atkins brings them. It's like, 'Okay, what do we need to do to make it happen?'

In short, Atkins' relationship to the board reflects familiarity, mutual respect, and shared objectives. The board's demonstrations of deference to their leader has clearly afforded her power to pursue her current, more radical course of action. Said Atkins, "There are moments when I can feel their trepidation because they still have to respond to the community constituents. But then I feel their resolve to keep going. And they have. They have been resolute in moving forward." The current school board has presented a united front with Atkins as she works to advance systemic change post-crisis. With board support, Atkins has greater power to compel stakeholders to follow her direction. For longstanding and authentic relationships, she is never "out on a limb alone" as she pursues even radical change initiatives in her organization post-crisis.

The Fall and Rise of Crisis Leadership

Important to the overall discussion of crisis optimization, the Charlottesville case suggests effective crisis leadership involves a kind of fall from grace on the part of the leader. However, a leader possessing certain attributes is not only equipped to survive the fall but to rise again stronger and to the benefit of her organization. Atkins' example showed the specific attributes explored above - aspects of character, values, and power - seemed to support the superintendent's effective response to the crises occurring within herself and within her organization. As the secondary crisis of organization came to Charlottesville City Schools in the fall of 2018, Atkins experienced deep disappointment. She accepted responsibility, committed to new goals, and began to lead through organizational learning. As organizational learning has catalyzed the transformation of the organization, this leader has found her greatest sense of purpose and professional accomplishment only now.

Leader Downfall

The secondary crisis of organization in the Charlottesville case brought on a period of reckoning that was devastating to Atkins. Character, values, and power compelled this leader's response to a crisis of conscience. Specifically her care for stakeholder wellbeing and her firm belief in justice and equality pushed the leader to acknowledge truth in the criticisms brought against her organization. Atkins acknowledged these truths despite many negative implications for herself and her organization. This course of action constituted a dramatic career low for this leader.

The New York Times article dropped on October 18th. The article "was devastating," described one leader stakeholder, "It created uproar in our community." Atkins reflected, "It almost felt as if we were going to implode as a school division because the pressure was so great

at that particular time." At a personal level, she said, "I went from feeling like an accomplished superintendent to feeling like the largest failure as a superintendent that you could have." Atkins felt betrayed by the organization's portrayal in the piece: "I can tell you as a superintendent I was hurt. It was overwhelming." More,

> I felt responsible for every aspect of the article. That it was my responsibility. And somehow I had let down the community. I had let down the school division. I had let down the students. I had let down the teachers. And that up to that point, perhaps we had not accomplished much of anything.

These reflections demonstrate the extent to which the Superintendent experienced the secondary crisis of organization as personal and professional failure.

Resolving the Crisis of Conscience

The Superintendent grappled with her response to the article and its accusations. Like many teachers and administrators, Atkins found problems with the article. The report was imbalanced. The article told the story of two African American students, one who missed opportunities and was not accepted to her choice university in contrast to another who excelled academically. Summarized one leader stakeholder, "What I believe the article did not point out enough is that the other African American young lady did… She did get those opportunities. She did get that teacher who said, 'You know what you can do, you can achieve, you can.'" However, in the end, reflected one teacher on the article,

> It called out the school division with specific stats. It showed we have an achievement gap, that we have kids enrolled in certain classes… A lot of those facts are just black and white. And it was hard to refute them because there is a problem.

Likewise, Atkins understood the truth in the article. "There was a question in my mind as to whether or not I should stay in the school division as the superintendent," she reflected, "Was I the right person?" The implications of that truth had bearing for her professionally.

Atkins recalled that, after much thought, she came to identify with the biblical figure Esther. Esther had kept secret her Jewish identity in marrying a Persian king. But at the moment the king moved to annihilate the Jews, Esther revealed her identity and appealed on behalf of her people. In this way, Atkins resolved to sacrifice her personal and professional self on behalf of her people, the minoritized members of the Charlottesville community. According to a leader stakeholder,

> One of the things that I think is most remarkable about her as a woman is that the easy thing for her to do, because VRS is a darn good retirement gig. She could consult all over the country based on who she is and what she's accomplished. She could probably double her salary, and she's got a good salary. But the reality is she decided to stick with it."

Said Atkins, "It became so little about me as about the right thing to do." Like Esther, she became the vital link between the status quo community that valued equity in words, and an unrelenting movement that demanded proof of values in action.

Atkins accepted the article, "I made this decision that I would accept the article as having immense value. And not view it as an indictment of me but to let the article be true. And to accept it as the foundation of truth. And then to grow our school system from there." When she embraced the article she did so openly and directly, bringing the entire stakeholder organization along with her. She organized the first of several forums, more than 500 people in attendance including the New York Times author of the article. At that forum,

I talked about the article. I talked about where we had let down the community, where we

had let down our students. I thanked the students for their courageous acting in

responding to questions that the author had asked. And I said, 'As much as we don't like

this article, and we can say many things about it, what we'd like to do is start with

accepting it as true and moving forward from there.

Per one leader stakeholder, "We could have gone to those statistics" of improvements in student

achievement, "But we didn't. We as a division, as a school board, said we're not going to take

that route." Reflected another leader,

Rosa said, 'Until we go with our motto Every Day, Every Child, then we know we still

have work to do.' And so we used that opportunity to have community discussions to see

what we can do to make sure that everyone is included.

Then in resolving the crisis of conscience by accepting the charges against her organization,

Atkins began again to advance her organization - but in a new direction.

Reemergence

Stakeholders recognized a change in their leader following the 2018 crisis of local

accountability. She reemerged from that adversity with new and greater priorities.   "The New

York Times article really was I think the pivot point for her," acknowledged one leader

stakeholder. Said another, "She decided that this is going to be her moment. This is going to be

the thing that she tackles with the power and the privilege of the position she has." In the words

of one teacher stakeholder, "Here is what I think. I think she grew a great deal as a result of

both, both the march on Charlottesville and probably grew even more with the New York Times

article and the community response to it." Stakeholders clearly identified the transformation of

their leader's motivation and strategies post-crisis.

Specifically, Atkins emerged from crisis with a stronger appreciation of the core values justice and equality as requisite to student success and wellbeing. The words of one other leader stakeholder summarized the nature of the change:

> I think she really has evolved from a servant leader to more of a social justice leader. And I don't know if I would have used that term before, but I've certainly seen an evolution. You know, when she came in, her mission was to serve the students within the system that we had. And now it has evolved to let's change the system we have to serve our students, you know, because there is a bigger mission out there.

Shared another leader,

> She told me at the beginning of this year that one of the things that she was most proud of was when she went to the Walker strings program concert back in the Fall. And she said, "Oh my gosh, there are for the very first time ever, African American kids, lots of them in the strings program." She said, "I am so proud of that." And you know? Those are different metrics for her than whether Clark Elementary got accredited.

That is, crisis consolidated a shift in the Superintendent's priorities away from traditional school outcomes and toward new measures of equitable access and representation.

Ultimately the Superintendent managed crisis in such a way that she herself has grown and benefited professionally. Here Atkins acknowledged her fall and then rise as leader through crisis:

> I was at rock bottom and had to restart - either leave the profession or had to start from that bottom. And I feel like from that position I have accomplished more in my profession than in hindsight I ever accomplished when I was receiving all of the accolades and the awards.

In the post-crisis phase this leader is experiencing a kind of professional success different from and beyond what she had known before. To be explored more in the next finding, Atkins is experiencing success at social justice educational leadership.

Summary

An important finding of this study is the dilemma of conscience that a causal crisis poses to leadership. Found in the case of the Charlottesville leader, the opportunity of crisis is trapped inside the internal dilemma. Character, values, and power are all attributes of leadership that supported Atkins' resolution of the internal crisis and her progress toward crisis optimization. Through character, expertise, and power Atkins found strength to rebuild self and organization from the post-crisis rubble, so optimizing an adverse circumstance for the improvement of both self and organization. In brief, this Charlottesville case provides an example not just of crisis optimization but also a detailed portrait of the leadership that made it possible. The next findings section includes description of Atkins' accomplishments since this pivotal point in her career.

Hierarchy of Social Justice Initiatives: Reaching Retributive Justice

This third major finding of the study addresses the pursuit of social justice. The literature suggests social justice efforts can be classified across three categories: distributive, recognitive, and retributive justice. Distributive efforts involve the equitable distribution of material and social goods. Recognitive efforts involve the acknowledgement of personal and systemic biases. Retributive justice is the revision of policies and procedures to ensure all groups have fair opportunity to participate and compete in the social mainstream. This study concurs with the existing classification schema and extends the model.

Specifically, this study finds a relationship between the category of social justice work and the degree of status quo resistance it provokes. At one end of a continuum is distributive justice. Distributive efforts elicit the least resistance from the status quo, so are most easily realized. In the middle of the continuum is recognitive justice. Recognitive efforts are more contested than distributive ones, so are more difficult for leadership to enact. At the far end of the spectrum, drawing greatest resistance, are retributive initiatives. Because of status quo resistance, efforts in the realm of retributive justice are the most difficult for leadership to achieve.

This phenomenon, a hierarchy of social justice initiatives, has implications for social justice leadership. A leader of lesser power might successfully pursue social justice in the realm of least resistance, the distributive realm. Meanwhile attempts to pursue higher categories of work might confound this leader. Still, those higher, more contested avenues to social justice open to a leader as she gains power over time.

The subsequent analysis explores this relationship between social justice initiatives and status quo resistance as evident in the case data. The analysis first vets the concept of

distributive justice through examples of leadership and status quo response at this lowest level of the hierarchy. Next the analysis explores recognitive justice, again comparing examples of Dr. Rosa Atkins' recognitive efforts to the evidence of increased stakeholder resistance. The concept of retributive justice, then, is shown to provoke the greatest resistance. Positive and negative examples from the Charlottesville experience substantiate this point.

Distributive Justice: Path of Least Resistance

Data from the Charlottesville case suggest that, across the several categories of social justice work, distributive justice efforts provoke the least status quo resistance. In the pre-crisis Charlottesville organization, empowered stakeholders embraced distributive initiatives that addressed obvious disparities in the organization's social order while preserving and even affirming these actors' control over resources and opportunities. This traditional approach to social justice seemed to reflect these stakeholders' saviour regard toward historically marginalized members of their organization.

Charlottesville City Schools' pre-crisis distributive efforts involved the acknowledgement and treatment of conflict symptoms, but did not involve the kind of root-cause analysis that may have pointed toward lasting solutions. That is, distributive justice required only single-loop learning on the part of the organization. Problems of discrimination, were treated as problems of disparity, which enabled the organization to pursue resource distribution without engaging underlying realities of racism or institutional bias.

Again, the Charlottesville case contains examples of distributive justice activities that posed minimal risk to the status quo and its membership. Therefore these initiatives were often embraced by the organization's traditionally empowered stakeholders. The data suggest that first, distributive justice initiatives may be attainable for many leaders. Second, distributive

efforts can provide relief from conflict dynamics. However, third, this kind of work will not resolve underlying conditions of injustice and inequality for its failure to treat conditions at their source. The following paragraphs relate the data in support of these subfindings.

Community Resistance and Mandate

Upon her hiring in 2006 Atkins received an implicit mandate setting limits to social activism from her office. Atkins arrived to Charlottesville City Schools on the heels of Dr. Scottie Griffin, an African American and female superintendent who challenged the organization with externally verified claims of "teacher inadequacies and a legacy of racism," per one local news report. Griffin's reform efforts provoked resistance and gained little traction at a time when the organization was not fully accredited and did not inspire public confidence overall. She was forced to leave the organization not one year into her contract. "Scottie had nobody out there publicly on the limb with her," remembered one leader stakeholder. The drama of her firing played out in the headlines of local media. "Can we fix the city schools?" local journalists reflected this community concern in their reporting.

With the hiring of Atkins, the board's first priority was to right the ship: to bring improvements in teaching and learning, and to keep the organization out of the headlines. "That was the big order, the marching order from her board," said one leader stakeholder, "Make all the media go away. We don't like this media coverage. We don't like this attention. Make that go away and also make all of our schools fully accredited and try to get kids to pass tests." While she recognized disparity in the schools, Atkins understood her responsibility to pursue the overall health of the organization and, decidedly, not to rock the boat. From another leader statement,

I think that people have no clue the pressure she felt coming into the system and needing

to be a successful Black superintendent after the failure of Scottie. How she defined

success was to a great extent defined by a board that said 'Make the media go away and

no more Scottie. Make the community calm down, get the schools accredited, and we'll

all be happy campers.'

Then at the start of her superintendency, Atkins was not able to pursue the retributive

recommendations Griffin had raised. However, she was able to address equity issues through

distributive supports that kept the traditional social structure in-tact. Examples of Atkins'

distributive justice work include universal improvements to instruction, distribution of

instructional technology, special program offerings, and targeted intervention efforts.

Universal Improvements to Instruction

Universal improvements beginning with access to high quality instruction would benefit

all stakeholders, and Atkins appreciated this opportunity. Said one leader, "What I saw with

Rosa is that her focus on efficacy was very grounded in the path to kids in poverty, kids of color

succeeding in life, was going to come through academic success." Atkins drew from her

experience in high-achieving Henrico County with respect to organizing an effective

instructional program. "She knew how to do the things that she knew how to do because she had

come through Henrico," shared one leader, "She brought a lot of the Henrico model with her

around charting the course for using data to improve instruction." In the first years of her

superintendency she pushed teachers to develop standards-based curricula. For the first time

teachers planned instruction to align with state-issued learning objectives. Atkins required

professional learning communities (PLCs) across grade levels and departments to support

standardization from classroom to classroom. Benchmark testing and related intervention

services became part of the organizational culture. Said one leader of Atkins' early priorities,

'That was a social justice piece for her, to have kids pass tests." Described another leader,

> I think when Dr. Atkins came on board, one of the first things that she did was to focus
> on ensuring that our curriculum was aligned to the standards in the core content areas in a
> very broad way. Okay, here is what the state says we have to teach. Let's make sure all
> of our teachers have those materials and those guides. So that was when we did the
> whole GPS curriculum mapping thing. So we were focusing in on the right thing. We
> began to build our budget around instructional needs.

Atkins requested funds to hire instructional coaches, so developing the instructional capacity of

her teacher force. She worked to significantly increase teacher salaries. She also developed a

course offering guide, to ensure parents could access information about opportunities available to

their children. Recalled Atkins,

> My first year in the school division there were no curricular guides, none. So we literally
> had to write 64 curriculum guides that aligned with the standards that we were going to
> teach. We wrote the curriculum guides and then we wrote lesson plans to go with each
> one of those standards. And that was a part of helping to acclimate our school division to
> standard-based instruction and put that in the hands of all of our staff and our teachers.
> And we built around that the training and the professional development that was
> necessary to build instructional capacity in the school division.

All of these activities extended higher quality instruction to students division-wide and across

demographic categories, so constituted distributive action. Atkins was able to pursue these

initiatives as general program improvements, without having to make claims around disparity,

race, or retribution. These efforts filled many gaps in minoritized and marginalized students' academic experience without changing the fundamental structure of schools.

Distribution of Instructional Technology

Another example of a distributive justice initiative is Atkins' successful distribution of personal computing technology. In 2009, still early to the arena of 1:1, Atkins requested take-home devices for all students. She persuaded the school board and greater community around the value of technology access generally. More than 2,000 tablet devices were purchased at a cost of $2.4 million, according to local newspaper reporting. And while these original devices were fraught with glitches, the organization remained loyal to this commitment. In 2015 the school division reinvested in the initiative, purchasing more and better machines to ensure technology access for all families. "We were fighting the idea of having a digital divide," said one teacher stakeholder, "between some parents that could provide technology for their kids and some kids that can't." Shared one leader stakeholder, "Our recent work is creating equitable opportunities for all students. But I think it started years ago when we started the initiative with those awful tablets." The superintendent reflected on the equity impact of this initiative on the present moment, the 2020 Covid-19 crisis environment. While more than half of the Charlottesville student body qualifies for free or reduced priced lunch, still 99% of students have computer access in the home. Per Atkins,

> Today with the Coronavirus in place, we have about 99% saturation with contact with our students because of the work that we put in place in 2009. And that was one of the policies and one of the efforts that we put in place in order to level the playing field with our students, and level access. And that has today paid off in a major way for students.

This quintessential distributive effort, the universal distribution of instructional technology, requiring a significant local investment of funds, has been favorably received. The initiative has not, however, affected the fundamental structure of schooling or resolved the challenge of inequitable school outcomes across demographic groups.

Special Program Offerings

Superintendent Atkins has pushed the development of multitude other programs that extend rich learning experiences to the entire student body. She has sustained the division's reputable fine arts and orchestra programs. She has brought new and sophisticated computer science and engineering opportunities. Atkins introduced elementary Spanish and secondary Chinese course offerings. Said one leader of Charlottesville's enrichment programming, "When other people might see that as a frill, we see that as something our students enjoy and can benefit from. And it is sort of a signature piece for us. It's like a bright spot for us." These niche programs are symbolic of the system, and attract hundreds of out-of-district students each year.

However, while Atkins conceived of many of these universal programs as empowering opportunities for disadvantaged students, too often the underlying structural forces of marginalization have posed obstacles to diverse student access. For example, African American students in the orchestra program have been few across the course of Atkins' tenure. Likewise, students of color have typically been underrepresented in accessing the district's engineering courses and cutting-edge STEM labs. Students of color are markedly underrepresented in the high school's impressive Advanced Placement (AP) course offerings. Related, one distributive initiative pledged to remove barriers to academic rigour through the division funding of all AP test fees. A remarkable gift of resources, the vast majority of students who have benefited represent traditionally empowered demographics. Per one student stakeholder,

> We offer 22 AP classes and pay for students to take all of their AP tests. Which that's a big cost. And I completely agree with that. I think that's wonderful. But if you think about the types of students who are in AP classes, most of them don't need you to pay for their AP tests.

Said another student of the district's STEM course offerings, "In my experience, I haven't seen a lot of like deliberate effort to help students who aren't necessarily at the top of their game to get in there - until recently." One leader stakeholder reflected on this phenomenon of biased representation,

> Whereas our community said, let's use our traditional approach and we're going to put a program out there. We're going to say it's for students with greatest need - but because it's new and shiny our parents of greatest voice, who are not our parents of kids of greatest need incidentally, are going to come forward and demand that their kid get into the new and shiny program.

The data suggest universal program offerings often elude marginalized stakeholders for reason of deeper structural forces that pose obstacles to their participation.

Targeted Intervention

Notably, many interviewed stakeholders and all stakeholders of color recognized targeted support programming as the district efforts most beneficial to minoritized and marginalized students. For example in Charlottesville these programs include public preschool and the AVID program. Other similarly targeted initiatives include the Bridges to Literacy afterschool program and the reimagination of the city's Lugo McGinness alternative school. From an analytical perspective, the classification of these program initiatives according to Gale's (2000) framework presented challenge. Targeted programming seems in some ways to span the categories of

distributive, recognitive, and retributive justice. The researcher ultimately chose to address these as distributive initiatives because they are primarily made possible through traditional funding allocations. These initiatives do not fundamentally affect the educational experience of traditional stakeholders or require their sacrifice beyond monetarily. Moreover, these initiatives engage the conditions that result from social disparity. They do not engage the problem of social disparity at its source or root cause.

With respect to preschool, Atkins came to the division with strong intentions to further develop the division's early childhood offerings. Preschool "was something Rosa did that absolutely represented a strong commitment to equity," said one leader stakeholder. "The city was always ahead of the county in terms of commitment to preschool resources." She pushed for expansion of the division's 3-year-old program to ensure the opportunity to families in each elementary attendance zone. This initiative finally succeeded during the 2015 school year. Each of the division's four elementary schools now host 4-year-old preschool and at least one 3-year-old classroom. The city of Charlottesville has supported this objective through a remarkable dedication of resources beyond what is typical of municipalities statewide. With early childhood education for underprivileged children, the Superintendent has worked toward leveling the radical divide in school readiness in this college community. Said one teacher stakeholder, "I think she has put a lot of emphasis in early childhood education, making sure that the kids get the basics. Putting more attention into getting those kids to read and write I guess at equal pace with kids coming from I guess White privilege." At the same time, other stakeholders suggested, underlying structural problems such as limited access to after-school care have kept many families from taking advantage of this critical support.

Another example, Atkins brought the AVID program (Advancement Via Individual Determination) to the organization in 2010. This program supports academic skill development and college readiness in promising first-generation college students. Stakeholders in their interviews celebrated AVID across the board. Reflected one student stakeholder on the importance of the AVID program,

> It's one of the programs where it recognized the fact that there were these inequalities and it said, okay we know certain kids are going to need extra help, extra practice, extra training. They're going to need to go do college visits to see stuff because their parents aren't going to drive them up and down the East coast to go see them… To really help these kids to get a little bit of the mobility that I'm talking about.

Atkins brought the AVID program to Charlottesville after its piloting in Albemarle County, effectively asking her community to match the model of neighboring Albemarle in supporting under-privileged students. Allowing Albemarle to go first and absorb the brunt of debate, the superintendent evaded the politicization of a program designed to benefit its students of greatest need. Stated one leader stakeholder, the two divisions often built equity programs in this way - allowing whichever division drew greatest favor to pilot something new.

Per Pupil Expenditure

These many initiatives purported to close opportunity gaps by extending high quality education to the whole student body. Remarkably, the locality consistently supported Superintendent Atkins in these pursuits, evident in a per-pupil expenditure of $17,079 for the 2018-2019 school year. The amount ranks far above the state average, circa $12,000, and denotes the extent of local dedication. Said one teacher stakeholder, "The reason we have all

these resources is because she fought for them and she schmoozed for them and she secured the funding." According to Atkins,

> Our community has never resisted funding education. We are one of the most well-resourced educational systems in the Commonwealth. So we have our reading specialists and math specialists and we have a host of resources. Small class sizes. All of those are resources that our community values and has supported for years, as long as I have been in the system. I don't get much pushback in those areas.

The tide of resources raised the organization's instructional program overall, which was a source of pride for both Atkins and the greater leadership. Still, the tide did not raise all ships to equal height. Greater structural barriers remained in place, often keeping marginalized stakeholders from the full experience and benefit of these programs. The status quo remained in a place of advantage. These forces ultimately begged recognition.

Summary

The story of Atkins' leadership is that of a leader always concerned with equity issues, but not always able to pursue them directly. Among the wealthy, liberally-professed establishment in Charlottesville she found support for social justice work at different levels over time. This community had deep pockets and was willing to devote its wealth toward distributive justice in the schools. Atkins was rarely denied requests for funding and so was able to hire more and better teachers, to purchase and distribute take-home technology, and to develop special programs to meet student needs. That is, the traditionally empowered community did not resist but rather embraced distributive justice in Charlottesville. And in this way, through distributive initiatives, Atkins was able to support the interests of marginalized students from the outset of her superintendency.

Recognitive Justice: Greater Resistance

In the Charlottesville case, recognitive justice occupied a place at the middle of the described continuum of resistance, between distributive efforts at one end and retributive efforts at the other. Recognitive efforts stoked resistance from traditionally empowered stakeholders by generating dissonance around their position of privilege and so disturbing the group's equanimity. Seen in Charlottesville, whether Black History Month programming or implicit bias training, all such events advanced a new paradigm while challenging core assumptions and institutions of the status quo - so prompting resistance.

The case data suggest recognitive justice initiatives constituted organizational learning. Through recognitive initiatives Charlottesville's traditionally empowered stakeholders had opportunity to see and appreciate value in their organization's minoritized populations. Through these events many stakeholders developed greater familiarity with and greater respect for diversity. Such opportunities for close consideration often revealed to stakeholders not only differences, but also their source. Recognitive efforts pushed stakeholders to grapple with personal and systemic biases, and the impact of one group's privilege on the disadvantaged other in their own community. Ultimately recognitive efforts pushed Charlottesville City Schools toward double-loop learning or root cause analysis of social problems.

However, the Charlottesville data also show such recognitive work will not be received without some degree of status quo resistance - and that resistance can be prohibitive. Fallout from resistant stakeholders can erode a leader's power. More, the study data underscore the notion that recognitive efforts have limited impact on long-term outcomes. Recognitive justice stops short of actually resolving those same sources of injustice that it reveals. Examples of Atkins' recognitive work in Charlottesville include diversity workshops and critical

conversations, also her efforts to adopt a whole-child approach to school success. Below is an accounting of these efforts and the response they received.

Diversity Workshops

A straightforward example of a recognitive initiative is diversity training. Over the course of her tenure, Atkins called for faculty and staff development with respect to diversity and equity on several occasions. According to interviewed stakeholders, participants received these inservice workshops neutrally at best. At worst, the events stoked division and resentment. One teacher stakeholder recalled an early attempt at diversity training in which the experience damaged culture at one school:

> One year we had what were called building level instructional facilitators. They were given extensive amounts of very explicit training on how you conduct courageous conversations within their building. And what happened was, at some of the buildings, the facilitators were so good, they were really well received. And we had one elementary school where it went south and those conversations when they go south, they can go so far south so quickly, that it ended up with people, with staff yelling at each other saying, 'You think I'm a racist?' Well, people left and that staff was fractured. And then we never could put Humpty back together again on that one.

With respect to this kind of work, one leader stakeholder recalled a feeling of "forging into territory, and there was really no impetus for it." Stakeholders asked of leadership, "'Why are you stirring this up?' ...And that's not what we were trying to do," said the leader, "We were just trying to get people to say, okay, we have got to start to look at things differently." This same stakeholder said of such efforts, "We kind of dissolved them a little bit. But that was only because we didn't know enough. We knew we had to do something. We wanted to do

something. But we too didn't know the right thing to do at the time or the right way to go about

doing it." Leadership moved away from such initiatives. Without clear case for the work,

resistance seemed too strong. Notably, the division has renewed equity training and staff

capacity building around race and diversity since the 2017 crisis event.

Critical Conversations

Multiple stakeholders reflected on a push for recognition made personally by the

Superintendent through critical conversations with faculty and staff early in her tenure.

Stakeholders remembered one particular conversation that made a divisive impact. Atkins called

the high school faculty to a meeting. In brief, she informed the faculty of a parent complaint

about discriminatory treatment by teachers. "She implied that the teachers at Charlottesville

High School maybe were arbitrarily checking passes and there was some racism going on,"

recalled one teacher stakeholder. Shared Atkins,

> In my mind, because we were such a progressive school division and a community that
>
> articulated quite a bit about social justice and about equality - surely bringing the faculty
>
> together and having this heart to heart conversation about this, everyone's consciousness
>
> would be pricked and they would all say "Absolutely not. That's not who we are." But I
>
> do recall after speaking with the faculty that was not the response that I got.

The event provoked indignation among the high school teachers, who thought of themselves as

committed to a mission of racial justice through education. Said one teacher stakeholder,

> There were a couple of incidents at the high school where people just felt undercut and
>
> called out. And again, were there some poor practices happening? Absolutely. But other
>
> people felt like they were doing the right thing. They were saying "Why am I getting

lumped in with this? How come we're all getting blamed?" And morale was really very

low.

Evidently the faculty was resistant to Atkins' critical conversations attempt at recognitive justice

at that time.

Similarly, stakeholders noted, Atkins held critical conversations around student data that

could become heated. These conversations often generated resistance and fallout. "Meetings

went badly when we talked about data," shared one teacher, "You look at the data and mostly it's

SOL data which shows the achievement gap between Black and White students. Yes, I mean

sometimes she could be a little harsh and I think unfair." Notably, "after 2017 the bandaids got

ripped off and people felt more comfortable" reflecting on personal and systemic bias, shared

one leader. At the same time, Atkins' thinking evolved in the second half of her

superintendency. Stakeholders suggested the Superintendent moved more toward an asset-

centered, relational, and holistic approach for supporting students and also for influencing staff.

Whole-Child Approach

Toward the middle of her superintendency Atkins began to shape the consciousness of

the division toward a whole-child approach to student support. Through a series of capacity-

building campaigns, Atkins pushed her educators to recognize and prioritize students' social and

emotional needs. She began this work by shining a light on disparities in school discipline - the

over-representation of minority students among suspensions, for example. Again, Atkins sought

to address the problem through the development of staff recognition and staff capacity in this

realm. "When I first started here our PD was more instructional," said one leader, "Now it's

about meeting the students where they are." Professional development has included restorative

practices, Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS), and other programs. Through

this multi-faceted, district-wide recognitive effort the Superintendent has grown the lens of the teacher to include cultural sensitivity, social-emotional learning, and trauma-informed care.

And while many teachers have embraced the new approach, some have struggled to relinquish a traditionalist mindset toward classroom management. "The nature of the division can be kinda hard slogging sometimes," said one teacher stakeholder, acknowledging that resistance, "We need to do many things with the kids. But I think most of our work right now has to be with the adults." A leader similarly voiced,

> Some of the people are resistant to systems change. And it's just mindset. Do they really feel like they share power with a student or with a family? Or do they feel like I need to be here and you need to be there? And that's the way I feel comfortable, so that's the way it has to be. And especially if you're an African American student. I may not feel as comfortable either interacting with the family as I would your, your average kind of White middle class family.

Still, through participation with the Virginia Tiered Systems of Support and through the staffing of school buildings with such motivated administrators as the high school's decidedly devoted principal, Superintendent Atkins has done much to shift the organization's way of seeing diversity and the related professional culture. "Schools are getting toward a kind of a tipping point where there's much more people who believe in change than don't," reflected one teacher stakeholder. Of resistant teachers, "It has become harder for them to justify what they're doing when more and more people are acting in practicing in a more inclusive way." The positive impact of this recognitive work is evident in the division's markedly improved graduation rates, especially across minority demographic groups.

Beyond Race

An anecdote shared by one teacher stakeholder highlighted the power of recognitive justice to open minds and also to generate resistance. To begin, Charlottesville teachers have now spent several years participating in professional development around race and equity. This winter one elementary school participated in a workshop with UVA professor of counselor education Dr. Joseph Williams who instructed about identifying and responding to micro-aggressions. "And then," said the teacher, "we actually had it happen at school. And it blew up." She shared her story. Elementary students were preparing to celebrate the 100th day of school. A spirit committee decided all would dress like 100-year old people. Said the teacher, "I emailed the principal that I felt kind of uncomfortable with that," said the teacher, identifying ageism. She said, "Until we had that PD with Dr. Williams I feel like I didn't have the words to say what I was feeling… I don't want to teach children to make fun of the elderly." The teacher reported that her concern created a schism of sorts and colleagues continue to be upset with one another over the question. Then whereas this community seems now finally prepared to recognize concerns over racial injustice, stakeholders may still resist recognition of bias in other categories. Again, the researcher found this narrative in alignment with the greater themes of this finding, the hierarchy of social justice initiatives with respect to status quo resistance.

Toward a Process

Prior to August, 2017 superintendent Atkins pushed her district toward social justice through isolated recognitive events as described above. According to stakeholders, the events tended to feel sporadic, accusatory, and inconsequential. Suggested one teacher stakeholder, the district leadership's recognitive efforts often seemed intended as solutions in and of themselves:

Like I'm going to sit down and we're going to this meeting with your faculty and we are

going to talk about these issues, and then people go "Oh! what's the next step?" And no,

that was the step, having that meeting was the step.

Without context, and without format, these recognitive events met significant resistance.

Importantly, the crisis of 2017 and 2018 overshadowed all prior events in terms of their

recognitive power. Torches in their streets burned recognition of the persistent force of racism

into the minds of many community members. Hearing African American neighbors affirm the

New York Times assertions persuaded resignation from still more. In the pendulum swing of

politics, the rise of White supremacy raised concern and lessened traditional resistance to social

justice initiatives in the school organization.

More, the magnitude of crisis pushed the school division leadership to develop a more

systematic approach to its continued recognitive pursuits. Teachers shared they now feel open

and receptive to district efforts toward increasing staff capacity around issues of diversity and

equity. "Yes there is a critical mass," said one teacher about the regard for organizational

learning in this arena, "Oh, everybody is driving it." Teachers stakeholders shared they want

organizational learning experiences around issues of equity, and they want it to reflect

characteristics of effective professional development. Likewise the division leadership hopes to

create a program of professional development that is organized, embedded, and sustained. "I do

think we have shifted from moving it through events, and more to a process, more to a system,"

affirmed one teacher of the school division's latest efforts to engage these issues. Found

throughout the data, embracing a recognitive process is one strategy Atkins has employed to

leverage crisis and advance organizational learning in ultimate support of retributive justice.

Summary

Whereas distributive justice allows traditionally empowered stakeholders to exercise their strength, recognitive justice invites all stakeholders to examine the traditional hold on power. Recognitive justice not only celebrates diversity, but also puts the status quo under microscope. The Charlottesville case demonstrated the likelihood of recognitive events to stoke status quo resistance. Isolated attempts at recognitive justice, especially, were shown to be difficult for a traditional community to absorb. The August, 2017 White supremacist rally was a recognitive event that "ripped off the bandaids" and allowed Superintendent Atkins to hold difficult conversations and implement diversity trainings without the resistance she felt prior. Atkins and other stakeholders of the organization acknowledged recognitive work left to be done, and they look forward to doing it in a more formal and systematic way post-crisis.

Retributive Justice: Path of Greatest Resistance

Retributive actions are policy and procedural revisions intended to remove institutional biases that advantage or disadvantage stakeholder groups. The Charlottesville case suggests retributive justice is the highest category of social justice work, for its potential to treat root causes of injustice and so effect lasting change.

At the same time, the data show retributive activities have generated the greatest amount of status quo resistance in the Charlottesville City Schools organization. Evidence from the Charlottesville case indicates how resistance to retributive justice manifests in school organizations. Parents' prioritization of the success and wellbeing of their own children has made the loss of institutional advantage feel intensely personal. Seemingly small changes have often provoked large-scale responses. Examples of retributive initiatives and related resistance in the Charlottesville case data include the revision of a senior lunch policy, the revision of the CLASS program registration procedure, efforts toward program integration and unleveling, and

the overhaul of the Quest Gifted program. Also relevant to this subfinding is the narrative

around superintendent Dr. Scottie Griffin's ousting in 2005, immediately prior to Atkins' arrival.

Senior Lunch Policy

One example of a limited policy revision and the resistance it provoked, a student

stakeholder reflected on the new high school principal's decision to change a practice of

allowing seniors to leave the building during lunch. In effect, while privileged children sped

their cars to restaurants and shortly returned, less-privileged children walked away from the

school building and often did not come back to finish the school day. "He made it more difficult

to leave during lunch," shared the stakeholder about the policy change. "He took out the rule that

you could just go out of the school and back in. You had to get parent permission for that. I

clearly remember that being just like a topic of discussion among people because they didn't like

that." More,

> I think there was a lot of resistance to the changes in terms of, people, they'd think it was
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> unfair. They didn't think that their kids should have to - like with the lunch change - they
>
> didn't think that they should have to go through all these steps because their kid is a high
>
> achieving student. Why should they be impacted by that? Okay, great, this is a problem,
>
> but I don't understand why your solution needs to address the entire student body. Why
>
> can't you just be doing things specifically towards the students that are suffering from
>
> this?

The student's reflections suggest status quo resistance to small-scale efforts at retributive change

occurred at the building-level.

CLASS Program Registration

A similarly limited change at the elementary level has also generated pushback. One community stakeholder, a professional White female, provided this simple example of retributive action and establishment response. She explained her child participates in the CLASS program, a City Schools offering of after school care for families in need. The program registration procedure has recently been recognized to disadvantage working class families. An effort to change the procedure has prompted resistance from traditionally advantaged stakeholders. She shared,

> If you're asking parents who need an afterschool program to show up at three o'clock in the afternoon to register your child on a weekday, you're losing part of that population. You know, like maybe parents can't take off work. Right? And so one of the conversations happening this year is do we go to a lottery system? Right? So it's not just the parents who have flexibility in their schedules. Do we go to a lottery system for afterschool? Some of the County schools do that to try to make it more equitable access.

Expressing her own concern about the new uncertainty around obtaining a place in the program, "I hate to say it because it does not benefit me, but the lottery system is the way to go to benefit all." This parent stakeholder also reflected on the resistance this change has generated among her own social community. "So currently, there's lots of debate around this," she said. She shared there has been disgruntlement in her parent circles, "It's like I don't want the landfill in my backyard. But it needs to go somewhere, you know?" This example, too, suggests status quo resistance to even a small-scale procedural change intended to remove systemic bias and level the playing field.

Unleveling

Seemingly the greatest challenge of equity facing Charlottesville City Schools is the full integration of diverse students across all programs and opportunities. Again, the profound divide between Charlottesville's impoverished minority demographic and highly educated university community is nowhere more exposed than in schools. One student faction enters elementary school severely below expected readiness levels, while another enters school multiple grade levels ahead. Despite early intervention, it has been a challenge to serve these groups together. Students are split into leveled math classes as soon as fifth grade, for example. The leveling of one course area shapes the master schedule for all, and students have therefore experienced a de facto segregation that includes inequitable learning experiences and outcomes.

Stakeholders reflected on the particulars of this circumstance. On the one hand, reflected one leader stakeholder, Charlottesville students experience great diversity even from a young age. At an elementary school,

> I went into the lunch room and round this table was four or five boys and they were sitting there just joking, laughing, talking about football. Not American football, but soccer. And one young man was from Tanzania, another one was from Mexico and Honduras and one from Belmont. And I said, you know, there they are. You know, they all came in at different levels I'm sure. But they are learning, playing, breaking bread together.

The stakeholder felt that in this way Charlottesville provides a unique and worldly preparation for its students.

At the same time, student stakeholders reflected on their experience as one of de facto racial segregation in school. According to one student stakeholder,

After maybe fourth grade at a school that was like 40% Black, I was probably one of the only if maybe one of two Black students or even generally students of color in any of my classes. I mean, and this is, this is stuff that's not necessarily surprising, right? This is what the New York Times article went into. That is like a just general defining thing I think about the school system demographically.

Said another student when asked about minority students' experience of the August, 2017 event:

I can't really attest to that because I had so few Black students in my classes. This is the one thing that I think the school really struggles with, is the fact that it's at least a third Black but very divided in terms of a lot of the achievement measures. And so my classes, where I took five AP junior year and six senior year, I just wasn't really exposed to that.

As noted, the New York Times analysis found minority students far under-represented in the school system's AP and enrichment offerings, while over-represented in retention and school discipline.

Early Efforts. Unleveling is the name given to a retributive effort intended to address this divide by bringing diverse students together in classrooms, so providing them access to the same rigour and opportunity. Superintendent Atkins has supported unleveling over the full course of her tenure, but to different degrees at different times. Early in her tenure Atkins collapsed leveling in the elementary school grades, requiring that differentiated instruction occur within every classroom. Said Atkins of the organization upon her arrival,

In the kindergarten, first grade they were placed in classrooms or master schedules at the elementary school that were done according to reading ability. So in classes you had students just clustered, homogeneously clustered. So we made the decision that there had to be more heterogeneous grouping in our schools where you have diversity in the

classroom, diversity of ethnicities, diversity of abilities, and then start training our

teachers on differentiation… a great deal of that was done.

Atkins also supported grassroots, teacher-led efforts at unleveling that took place at the

secondary level sporadically over the years. That is, Atkins empowered convicted teachers to

unlevel their own classrooms. Per one teacher stakeholder,

> The (subject area) teachers got together and said, "well, they all have to learn the same
>
> content according to the state. And so is there really a reason for us to have them
>
> separated in this way?" I mean, part of it is self separation. Part of it is separation based
>
> on perceived ability and thinking about whether or not they're going to go into higher
>
> level classes. And so we pitched combining everybody and differentiating within the
>
> class. And the principal was on board.

Thus pockets of unleveling occurred in the sciences, in social studies, and in language arts.

However, through these pilot efforts Atkins and teachers saw the strength of community

resistance. "Where I get the most pushback is when we start to discuss a policy or procedural

change," said Atkins in interview, "One example was at the high school when we first started to

look at unleveled classes." She described the status quo resistance and its impact on teachers,

> That was in 2015, I believe it was. We had talked about unleveling classes - putting in
>
> honors students, your academic students, and some students who were really not the
>
> strongest students in the same classroom. So having three different levels in one
>
> classroom. And we talked about it, set out to have a plan. As soon as we published the
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> program of study and had talked with our parents about it and it became a reality, that's
>
> when we started to get the resistance. I had to meet with parent group after parent group.
>
> Some of the comments that we heard, that we would be watering down the curriculum,

that those students would not quite understand how to engage in that level of rigor. And

my student will miss out because the teacher's attention will be on those students. How

is it going to be possible to put those students in the same classroom with my student

because my student is so advanced. And we had to work through all of that. I had many

discussions about that. And we allowed it to move forward and there was a great deal of

success with it. It takes a toll on a teacher, to have to make sure that you're still staying

engaged and helping to take your families through the benefits of that and continue those

conversations. And year after year when you're doing that, after a while a teacher gets

tired. Because you're having to have such in-depth and very complex conversations with

families to justify what you're doing. And it's almost relentless, those conversations.

One leader stakeholder made a point to recognize the Superintendent's support for these teacher-

led efforts at unleveling even in the face of community resistance, "Rosa really supported giving

those teachers a chance to take on unleveling at the high school." Ultimately the Superintendent

did not push farther toward the top-down, systematic de-leveling of the entire system. Per one

leader, "She at that time was probably frustrated by that, but really not certain, how do I take that

on and keep a job?" Teachers' isolated efforts at unleveling tended to fade away with the

exhaustion of their energy or through turnover.

Post-Crisis. As discussed, the crisis events of 2017 and 2018 yielded a shift in power

away from the status quo mindset and towards the prioritization of equity. Unleveling of the

system was a principal mandate of the community's democratically-sourced response to the New

York Times reporting. Atkins and the school board incorporated this objective in the

organization's strategic plan. Approaching the 2019-2020 school year Atkins instructed her

principals to pursue unleveling. Courses have since been removed, and others have been expanded. Said one leader stakeholder,

> I don't know how else to say it. The superintendent said you're going to unlevel it, and so we unleved it. And we ate the whole sandwich in one bite. And it was and continues to be very difficult. But I'm of the mind that in this district, if we don't engage in massively significant change in the first couple of steps, that community will is going to shift and we're never going to get the change. So we just flat out unleveled.

Per another leader,

> Our Black and Brown students weren't taking honors level classes and it's because they didn't feel like they could or they weren't recommended for it. And there was a lot of bias going into, you know, that course recommendation process... So we've picked some. We've shifted from world history 1 to world geography. That's the ninth grade course. Those are unleveled. Biology is unleveled and geometry is unleveled. And then our world languages only like level one and level two… And our data is showing, I mean there has not been a dip.

By this point in time the district's principals have all, if imperfectly, begun the unleveling work.

Resistance to this retributive work has not abated, but again it lacks the power and passion it possessed before the unfolding of crisis and recognition. Superintendent Atkins mentioned the fact that intentional schedule changes had opened up the fine arts program to minority students. When at a Fall, 2019 Board meeting it was announced that the middle school orchestra had appropriate demographic representation for the first time in its history Atkins felt surprised that no one in the audience cheered the development. Reflected one leader stakeholder on the resistance he continues to encounter,

I can't tell you the number of parents who come to me and say, the term is "like-minded."

As opposed to "don't put my White kids with that Black kid or don't put my rich kid with

that poor kid. Instead they say, "My kid needs to have classes with like-minded

students."

One teacher reflected on a loss of rigour perceived by students and families under the new

unleving,

I mean they respect the diversity that they see in the classrooms, they respect the intention

of the unleveling. But they'll tell you that we did more difficult work in eighth grade and

honors English 9 than what we're doing now.

This teacher stakeholder shared her agreement, "The kids who are accelerated sometimes don't

get the attention they need. I'm not saying it's a failure. It's a challenge." Still, and in spite of

this challenge, most schools seem to have achieved faculty consensus in favor of this change.

Gifted Overhaul

Reform of the Gifted program is a poignant component of the unleveling work. As

detailed prior in the study's first finding, minority students have been far under-represented in

Charlottesville's original "Quest" Gifted program. The program pulled Gifted identified

students, also a second tier of reach students, out of their classrooms for the regular delivery of

enrichment services. Empowered by the New York Times coverage and community feedback in

2018, and upon the discovery of the Ms. Smith letter in 2019, Atkins sought immediately to

revise the program. "There is something about when the time is right and you move into action,"

she told local press. "For such a long time, we've been knocking on the door to get our children

in the Gifted program," she said, "We should have been knocking the door down, and the

structures that held up that door, to get them in. Our students are incredibly smart. Black and Brown students are smart."

Atkins reported she consulted with University of Virginia scholars of Gifted education, and with other scholars nationwide, to conceive of a new system that would deliver Gifted services universally through a push-in format. The new model would require significant community resources for the hiring of additional Gifted teachers. Reported one local publication in the spring of 2019, "Atkins faced backlash for requesting $620,000 from the city out of the normal budgeting cycle to hire eight Gifted specialists to strengthen the changes to the program." More, "Parents criticized her administration during a School Board meeting public comment session for moving too quickly to recruit more staffing."

Certainly this change to an institution that delivered unique advantage to the status quo community over decades has garnered resistance, even in the post-crisis environment. During the course of one interview with the researcher the Superintendent pulled a printed email from a stack of papers in her office. "Someone slipped this to me," she acknowledged,

> It is email communications after one of the meetings that I had with the parents about the new model that was coming. All of the accusations that were being made against me in this communication. Although we sat there and everyone was so polite and so kind. But then to read this string of emails that have occurred after our meeting was so revealing as to how deep this discrimination was in our school division and how embedded it was in the culture and the expectation and the entitlement of people to this model.

From a different source, one community stakeholder shared her own perception of the establishment concern:

The bigger conversation I would say is about the restructuring of the Gifted program to a push-in instead of a pull-out... I know that the goal is then to serve more students. And I know that there's been some question about whether or not it's going to end up being diluted, right? What about that true one person at the very, very top. Is a push-in model enough or are they going to need more? It shouldn't be just general instruction serving all kids.

Interviewed stakeholders provided ample evidence of continued resistance to this retributive change.

However, the crisis events of 2017 and 2018 brought change in both the motivation of the leader and the locus of power in the Charlottesville City Schools community. The recognition of racism and disparity not only empowered minority stakeholders, but also brought many traditionally-minded stakeholders to understand the moral impact of inequitable services. Atkins and her Board continue to stand united and resolute in the assumption that the traditional Gifted identification system has been biased, also in their assumption that all students are "gifted." They continue to pursue this retributive change, the redesign of the Gifted program for a more universal delivery of services, despite residual resistance in the post-crisis period.

Scottie Griffin

The story of Dr. Scottie Griffin's superintency, related in local press and also in the interview statements of multiple stakeholders, further illuminates a relationship between retributive justice and status quo resistance so is relevant to include in this report. As described earlier in the chapter, Griffin was Charlottesville's first African American and female superintendent. She came to the division in 2004, immediately preceding Atkins. Griffin vacated her position during her first year. Specifically, Griffin's superintendency shows the

potential strength of status quo resistance to retributive social justice initiatives, enough to force a superintendent from her post.

Immediately upon her arrival to Charlottesville, Griffin identified and sought to prioritize racial inequities in the organization. She contracted a third party organization, Phi Delta Kappa International, to audit the school division through the broad lens of social justice, student engagement, and academic outcomes. The audit "came to the polarizing conclusion that Charlottesville's gap in standardized test scores had to result from teacher inadequacies and a legacy of racism," read one piece of local journalism from spring of 2005. In the words of the audit, "No city can survive by only serving one-half its constituents well." The report included guidance for division leadership, principally the recommendations to pursue unleveling and reform of the Gifted program.

However, the stakeholder community rejected these recommendations and, in its wake, pushed Griffin out of office. Documenting the community's resistance to the 2005 audit, the New York Times reported in 2018,

> A parent who is now a City Council member, responded to the audit in an internal memo to the school board, urging the board to reject the racial bias findings, which she called "unnecessary and in fact harmful," and implored members to focus on improving "our educational system for the benefit of all children."

Local journalism likewise contains evidence of community resistance to Griffin herself. One division leader "penned a scathing letter to the superintendent" in the wake of the audit. The letter contained criticism of both Griffin's priorities and leadership style. This letter became public and gathered interest. Griffin's departure took place soon after. Said one leader stakeholder of Griffin, "She basically ended up having to change her name to get a job."

The strength of resistance to Griffin's efforts informed Atkins' subsequent superintendency. Said one leader stakeholder of Atkins,

> A lot of the things that she did incrementally support - not exponentially support but incrementally support - really came from a position of her trying to move things into the mainstream without using code language that might set community people into a place of pushing too hard against it.

Expressed differently,

> I think one of the hardest things that probably Rosa had to do along the way was to try to live in the middle of a city where you had people that professed liberal - they voted liberal, they lived liberally. But they were very happy to keep schools the way they were.

Throughout her tenure Atkins successfully pursued universal improvements to instruction and other distributive justice initiatives, but only after the crisis events of 2017 and 2018 has she openly taken up those same retributive objectives that Griffin's audit identified in 2004-05.

Summary

Status quo resistance to retributive social justice is strong because retributive efforts remove a guaranteed power advantage that has protected this faction. Retributive justice may not be available to the social justice school leader; it was not available to Atkins for most of her long Charlottesville tenure. Said one leader stakeholder,

> I'm just going to be very blunt. The University of Virginia has a pretty traditional group of adults who are parents in our community who are really good at talking the talk of closing gaps in equity and equality and inclusion. But not in my backyard. So if it comes to things like redistricting that very people that will sit in their classes and teach Freire,

etcetera, again will say in a million different ways "No, we don't want those kids in our schools."

For more than a decade Atkins relied primarily upon distributive initiatives to address the marked disparities between students in Charlottesville. She often chose not to engage the root cause of that disparity, or pursued it with great subtlety. But crisis changed the distribution of power and lessened the traditional resistance, opening the door to change. Said Atkins,

> I knew that because of that New York Times article, and all of the work that we had done to that point, and then the 1958 Gifted letter, that we were on firm ground in our quest to move this and change this model and move the way we place students in classrooms, and make all of the changes that have been put in our equity plan. To start having an equity committee. To align ourselves with the National Equity Leadership Council. To start talking about - boldly speaking about - issues of race and issues of equity. And to start making statements about a racial equity policy, an equity policy, and to position our school board to have the strength that would be necessary to continue to move this issue and this initiative forward.

This exploration of the hierarchy of social justice leadership in relation to status quo resistance, concluding with the narrative around Scottie Griffin, begs the question of how Atkins has been able to pursue the same objectives Griffin put forth but now does so successfully from a place of overwhelming strength and favor. Further deliberation of this point features in the discussion chapter.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

This final chapter begins with synthesis of the study findings, that is a discussion of overarching themes drawn from across the three major findings and also with consideration for the literature. The discussion leads toward a proposal, a theory of *crisis optimization for social justice realization*. A statement of conclusion follows and succinctly addresses the question of what has been learned from the project in its entirety. Sections on implications offer next-steps for both research and practice. There is then a brief review of the study in full: problem and purpose, literature, methodology, findings and conclusion. Some final reflections of the researcher bring the project to a close.

Synthesis of Findings

Considered together, the study findings support several main ideas or takeaways. To begin, a first main idea is the classification of crisis as a recognitive event. This assertion treats the concept of crisis through the lens of social justice educational leadership. Scholars in this arena agree, broadly, that social justice educational leadership involves the critical examination of group disparities and the promotion of cross-cultural respect and appreciation (Jean-Marie et al., 2009; Marshall & Oliva, 2010; Dantley & Tillman, 2010). Gale's (2000) framework offered a system for classifying social justice initiatives as distributive, recognitive, or retributive. The study data seemed to reflect this schema; it became a helpful conceptual tool over the course of data analysis. Recognitive events, Gale explained, are efforts to bring mainstream attention and appreciation to the condition of historically marginalized people.

Crisis, of course, is no deliberate effort. Crisis is not a leadership initiative. Rather crisis is an unplanned and unwanted occurrence. But crisis fits the criteria of a recognitive justice event because it involves the large-scale revelation of a system's key weaknesses. The

magnitude and intensity of a crisis event, the degree of damage and loss, is such that the origins of a conflict can no longer be ignored. Crisis shines a bright light on these complex dynamics that a system once passed over. Crisis supports stakeholder recognition of problems with the status quo.

Specifically, crisis supports the recognition of a society's social injustice. Often crisis events treat these issues directly. The 2017 White supremacist demonstation in Charlottesville was such a crisis. This event literally paraded the persistence of personal racism through the streets and in front of news media cameras. Other crises may not be socially charged at the surface, but may reveal themselves as such over the course of crisis unfolding. For example, the Covid-19 pandemic is a public health issue. But the virus has disproportionately affected racial and ethnic minority groups both in terms of infection rates and in terms of financial fallout. Exploration of the phenomenon reveals there is no reason for this disproportionality beyond aspects of systemic racism that have left minoritized populations with lesser economic and healthcare resources (Center for Disease Control, 2020; Ro, 2020). This public health crisis, then, reveals significant realities of social injustice by measures not previously appreciated.

Stated differently, all crises have social justice implications because they reveal shortcomings of the status quo order. And importantly, as they show holes in the status quo, crises rattle the traditional hold on power. As stakeholders recognize weakness in traditional systems, they appreciate a need for change. In crisis, power effectively flows away from the status quo and becomes available to less-enfranchised stakeholders. Recognitive events are learning events, and learning opens the door to a shift in power away from the status quo and toward the margins of an organization. Again, crisis is a recognitive event.

The second main point of discussion is that crisis optimization involves not just organizational learning, but more the transformation of an organization. Reflecting on the literature, the field of crisis management overwhelmingly celebrates organizational learning as key to effective crisis management (Bowers et al., 2017; Coombs, 2012; Mitroff, 2005; Wang, 2008). The literature links organizational learning and crisis management to such extent that organizational learning emerges a seeming end in and of itself. Consider, for example, the highly regarded Pearson and Mitroff (1993) model that ascribes organizational learning as the appropriate management strategy in the final post-crisis phase. Over the years the principal revision to this Pearson and Mitroff's model has been the suggestion to incorporate organizational learning at all phases of the crisis cycle and especially pre-crisis (Lagadec, 1997; Liou, 2015; MacNeil & Topping, 2007; Robert & Lajtha, 2002; Veil, 2007). Again, the literature suggests organizational learning is the crisis management objective.

But, as seen in the Charlottesville case, organizational learning is better understood as the means to an end. Organizational learning involves shaping the consciousness of the stakeholder body and consolidating a paradigm shift, that is a shift in the community's values prioritization and power base. Organizational learning makes possible the realization of transformative efforts. Importantly, it is not in recognizing problems (learning) but rather in fixing those problems (transformation) that the opportunity present in crisis is fully realized. The lasting transformation of the organization in response to organizational learning is what constitutes crisis optimization.

Considered through the lens of social justice educational leadership, the transformation of an organization is accomplished through retributive justice efforts. Retributive efforts involve the redistribution of a system's institutional advantages through the revision of policies and

procedures. Data from the Charlottesville case showed clearly that retributive justice prompts status quo resistance and so is difficult to achieve. However, in the wake of a crisis - the ultimate recognitive event - the position of the status quo is weakened and the position of the marginalized population is emboldened such that retributive justice is, in that moment, a possibility. In the post-crisis period, retributive transformation brings the organization into alignment with an emergent paradigm.

Generalizing the relationship, it is helpful to think of retributive justice as dependent on recognitive justice. A leader is more likely to succeed at retributive justice as follow-up to recognitive events. As stakeholders come to know and appreciate diversity, and as they come to understand the source of disparities, they are primed for change. The third finding of the study suggested a hierarchy of social justice initiatives with respect to status quo resistance. It may be helpful to think of the schema as a dependent hierarchy.

The Charlottesville case shows how crisis constituted a recognitive event that readied the organization for retributive initiatives. The 2017 White supremacist rally and the subsequent equity audit revealed undeniable evidence of racism. The events compelled a recognition of racism and systemic bias in the hearts and minds of many, including the stakeholders of the school division. That recognition amounted to a paradigm shift in the organization. Consensus moved away from the traditionalist, distributive approach to social justice and towards a higher level of commitment. Though some traditionally-minded stakeholders remain resistant to change of this kind, they have lost the status they once held.

Again, as seen in Charlottesville, the great irony of crisis is that pain and loss force open the door to meaningful change. However, the Charlottesville case also suggests the experience of a crisis event is not sufficient for catalyzing change. Leadership plays a fundamental role in

consolidating organizational learning and driving forth change initiatives post-crisis. To fully overcome a system's cognitive inertia requires great effort. Without leadership's deliberate intent to leverage crisis, an organization will tend to return to the status quo arrangement. But by deliberately moving a community forward toward new ways of thinking and doing a leader succeeds at crisis management. Stated differently, the work of crisis optimization involves consolidating organizational learning and driving forth change. To optimize crisis by transforming an organization in its wake requires extraordinary leadership - a dedicated and motivated leader.

Another main idea revealed across the study findings, then, is that the transformation of the leader precedes the transformation of the organization. That is, if a crisis prompts organizational learning and change at the level of the leader, then the leader develops the capacity to lead for change. The work of changing the status quo is so fraught that the leader must act from a place of both understanding and conviction. To endure the pressure and sacrifice that crisis optimization requires, a leader must employ attributes of character, values, and power as never before.

The Charlottesville case shows how global crisis eventually brought internal reckoning to the leader of a local school district. The leader faced a choice: loyalty to the status quo in which her power was vested, or loyalty to values and principles that constituted her moral purpose. The choice involved high stakes for the leader both personally and professionally, such that in making it she also recommitted herself to her own priorities. As Charlottesville's Atkins sacrificed what was known for what was new, what was comfortable for what was right, her stakeholders witnessed a change in their leader - a new and urgent sense of purpose.

Fully committed to change, this leader then chose to strategically exacerbate the experience of post-crisis learning in her organization. And then, following sufficient learning, she proceeded to press change initiatives on the community. Many stakeholders followed the superintendent's lead, while some others became sidelined and / or left the organization. But clearly, when leadership realigned away from the organization's status quo and with the traditionally marginalized faction then at that point the potential for crisis optimization or transformation of the organization became a reality. When crisis touches the leader and lights a fire within her, then there is real hope for the transformation of an organization.

A final point of discussion encompasses the complex intersection of crisis, leadership, and social justice explored in the preceding paragraphs. It does not escape the author that the data from Charlottesville contained not one leadership case, but two. In 2005, Charlottesville's first African-American and female superintendent Dr. Scottie Griffin sought to raise the organization's awareness about problems of internal racism and injustice through an external evaluation and related policy recommendations. As response to her initiative, the community forced Griffin from her position less than one year into her contract. Now in 2020 Dr. Rosa Atkins pursues those same retributive actions but this time with community support. How did one leader succeed at social justice educational leadership where another leader failed? Access to data from the time of Griffin is limited so research implications are regarded only lightly. But comparison of the two leaders suggests Atkins possessed something that Griffin did not. In fact Atkins had several things Griffin did not. Atkins had the unique and remarkable package of leadership attributes related in this study's second finding: moral purpose, determination, expertise, and relationships built over a long tenure of service. But more, Atkins had a crisis.

Toward a Theory

Synthesis of these discussion points supports the formulation of a theory, an attempt to generally capture a causal relationship inferred from the study. Called *Crisis Optimization for Social Justice Realization*, this conceptualization extends the traditional phased crisis model beyond the objective of organizational learning and toward the outcome of meaningful change. More, whereas traditional crisis research has treated the health of the organization, this conceptualization acknowledges the consequence of crisis management for the human condition.

Breaking down the theory into its component propositions, global crisis prompts popular criticism of the status quo. That rise in popular criticality post-crisis affects even local organizations. With respect to local leadership, a strong and motivated leader can embrace the emergent global paradigm. A leader can apply learning strategies to consolidate a shift in the values consensus within her own organization, pushing power toward stakeholders at the margins. Though traditionally empowered stakeholders may continue to resist retributive justice, they do so from a significantly weakened position. Then, having cultivated a supportive climate in her community, a leader advances retributive justice initiatives for lasting change.

Importantly, though well-attributed leadership is necessary to the described series of events, it is crisis that seeds the relationship. According to this model, crisis is the initial condition. Again, if there is crisis, then there is a distinct opportunity for leadership to intervene with new recognitive and retributive efforts.

For leadership, this means successful crisis management involves more than returning the organization to its pre-crisis equilibrium. Again the promise of crisis optimization is not survival, but progress. Specifically, the Charlottesville case provides an example of an organization's social justice transformation. Dr. Atkins and Charlottesville City Schools

demonstrated how the product of the crisis sequence can be meaningful progress toward justice and equality in an organization. Through successful crisis management, power flowed from the organization's establishment toward traditionally disadvantaged stakeholders at its margins.

To be clear, this theoretical framing does not exalt crisis. Crisis is defined by the major damage it effects; it is never a desired condition. Nor is crisis requisite to change. There are many established avenues to change in an organization, including intentional leadership that shapes an organization's consciousness over time. However, if crisis occurs - as inevitably it does - then this framework suggests there is opportunity for a leader to leverage the event. Crisis is a catalyst of paradigm shift both globally and locally, throwing open a new door to retributive action. The crisis optimizer leads her organization through. If there is a global crisis event, then local leadership has opportunity to accomplish retributive justice in an organization.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this project suggests crisis provides a rich opportunity which a motivated and well-established leader can seize toward the betterment of her organization. Such a leader can leverage crisis to alleviate systemic injustice for the benefit of minoritized and historically marginalized stakeholders. In summary, through the management of crisis an educational leader stands to advance the pursuit of social justice in her organization.

Implications for Research

Implications for research reflect the limitations of this study's design. While qualitative case study yields the rich and subtle detail of a phenomenon, it treats the data of just one bounded case and so findings are not generalizable. Case study research begs for the replication of findings and, in this way, the generalization of its conclusions. Consider, for example, this study's first finding: the secondary crisis of organization. There is opportunity for additional

research to confirm the occurrence of the phenomenon in other organizations and with respect to other crises. A potential study could involve a retrospective examination of another global crisis event and its long-term impact on local organizations. For example, how have select school districts experienced the conflict dynamics of summer 2020's racial crisis and Black Lives Matter movement? To what extent has the rise in popular criticality forced crisis accountability upon these local organizations? This line of research could verify the study finding which would have value for both crisis management research and educational leadership practice.

Likewise, the study's second finding described a leadership-level crisis of conscience that was prerequisite to organizational learning in Charlottesville post-crisis. This finding, too, could be substantiated through the study of other cases. A researcher might identify organizations that have successfully transformed in response to global crisis. The researcher could then trace back the sequence of conditions and events supporting that outcome, looking especially for the leader's own internal grappling with crisis management in order to determine the impact of this phenomenon. For example, how have public school leaders in the American Southwest resolved their personal responsibility for the treatment of undocumented children and families in the age of the current administration's more aggressive efforts to remove them from the country? Have administrators experienced this conflict as a crisis of conscience? Do they feel differently about their professional mission after having personally confronted this issue? Again, to substantiate this second finding would have relevance both for the field of crisis management and for the field of educational leadership.

More, this study profiles a successful leader with respect to crisis optimization. Leadership attributes that contributed to her success emerged from the data as key concepts. Certainly there is opportunity for further study of leader attributes supporting crisis optimization.

Is Atkins' combination of caring and commitment, justice and equality, expertise and relationships a special formula for crisis optimization? Which of those attributes are most impactful? And are there others? The study of additional crisis leaders, both positive and negative cases, could strengthen the theoretical profile of a crisis-capable leader. What exactly are the attributes that support a leader toward crisis optimization? This study provides only a starting point for what seems another valuable line of research.

Finally, in the process of analysis this researcher took up a framework developed by Gale (2000) years prior. The data of the study seemed particularly to fit Gale's system for classifying social justice initiatives. The lens proved useful for sorting the many different approaches to social justice that educational leaders pursue according to categories of strength and availability. To note, it was helpful to explore the Charlottesville superintendent's social justice activities not only in terms of these categories but also in terms of hierarchy. That is, in this study's isolated incorporation of Gale's (2000) framework, the lens seemed theoretically powerful. Meanwhile a review of the literature around social justice educational leadership suggests this framework has not been widely regarded or applied. For the emerging field of social justice educational leadership that has struggled to coalesce around any one theory, such a schema for the classification of social justice initiatives might prove useful. But the framework requires further research application in order for substantiation and in order to achieve greater scholarly regard. An implication for research, then, is the further development of such a framework for the classification of social justice initiatives in educational leadership.

Implications for Practice

For practitioners, that is for school leaders, study implications begin with the recommendation that leaders should differentiate between trauma response and crisis

optimization. This implication draws from the study's first finding. The purpose of trauma response is to restore an organization to order following damage and disruption that affects an organization acutely. The purpose of crisis optimization is to help an organization evolve following a broader event with sociopolitical implications. Many school leaders use the terminology of crisis planning to refer to their trauma response procedures. This study introduces an altogether different phenomenon, the opportunity for school organizations to respond to and grow through the deliberate handling of global crisis events that affect them less directly.

A related implication is that educational leaders should anticipate their organizations will ultimately be held accountable to shifting values and power in the aftermath of a global crisis event. As such, leaders should study global crisis dynamics as events present. Leaders should actively review their organizations through the lens of these dynamics. Leaders should embrace the idea that their organization, however sheltered, is a fractal of a greater social context. Problems of the whole society are present in its constituent parts, thus they exist in school organizations. By studying global dynamics, a leader has the opportunity to anticipate and shape the effect of crisis on her organization.

Educational leaders should understand crises as significant learning events that bring opportunity for higher levels of social justice work, that is opportunity for the alleviation of bias in the workings of the organization. This statement echoes the conclusion of the study, that because crisis generates organizational learning, it opens the door to systemic change.

But another necessary element of the change formula is, of course, leadership itself. A social justice educational leader should fully understand her role in crisis optimization. The leader's responsibility is to embrace, advance, and consolidate the organizational learning that

crisis prompts. So doing, the leader cultivates a supportive environment for the advancement of social justice initiatives. Leadership strategies that bolster organizational learning include democratic processes and historical auditing. The public forum, the city council meeting, the student protest, the magazine exposé - these events are all opportunities for a social justice leader to empower traditionally marginalized voices and to advance a change agenda.

Finally, the study implies it would be advantageous for social justice educational leaders to understand and evaluate social justice initiatives in terms of classification and hierarchy. Leaders should know that some initiatives address the symptoms of injustice, while others shape consciousness, and still others treat injustice at its source. While distributive efforts provide short-term relief, retributive justice supports lasting change. This lens may have application beyond educational leadership even in the realm of public policy, as activists, community organizers, and lawmakers consider what project to drive forth - whether to focus energy toward reparations, or toward monuments, or toward criminal justice reform, for example.

Likewise, practitioners should understand social justice efforts are likely to generate more or less resistance according to their classification. So knowing, leaders should feel capable to pursue what social justice initiatives are available given the sociopolitical context within and around their organization at any point in time. Distributive initiatives are effective at relieving the symptoms of injustice felt by marginalized stakeholders. Recognitive initiatives are effective for shaping consciousness and motivating stakeholders in favor of change. Retributive actions revise policies and procedures to remove institutional biases. All these initiatives have value for minoritized and historically marginalized stakeholders. But more, as crisis - a recognitive event - shifts the balance of power and the values prioritization in an organization, higher level change initiatives once closed to a leader may open.

Consider, for example, the crisis of race relations facing the nation in this year 2020. According to the study findings, a secondary crisis of organization will come to localities in the wake of the global one. How will schools and their leadership be held accountable to these recently revealed crisis dynamics? How might the leader leverage this crisis scenario for the advancement of justice and equality in her organization? For example, the leader might use the crisis event as justification for an equity audit of discipline data. The leader might now call for an examination of her organization's relationship with the police. The leader might explore shortcomings in faculty and staff representation of racial diversity. This leader could re-examine dress code and other policies with respect to hate symbology. Certainly the leader could use this crisis as justification for providing minoritized and historically marginalized stakeholders with explicit opportunity to voice their concerns about the working of the organization. Through such a series of deliberate crisis-informed recognitive activities the organization could progress to serve its community more justly and effectively. Following a thorough exercise in recognitive justice, the leader may find her community prepared for next steps on the social justice continuum.

Or consider the global pandemic, a disruption at every level of society the likes of which has not been experienced in generations. A public health event, but what dynamics of this crisis have relevance for school organizations? Certainly the crisis raises concern over equitable access to instructional technology. More, have schools developed strategies to effectively communicate with their full diversity of stakeholders? Are traditional evaluation practices effective and necessary? Is year-round school finally a possibility? This is all to suggest the pandemic's revelation and aggravation of social disparities should influence the priorities of school leaders and stakeholders toward the interests of marginalized students.

But the global pandemic will require more of schools than an assurance of equitable access. This crisis reveals a challenge to the fundamental structure of schooling, a paradigm that scholars and practitioners have taken issue with for some time. Presumably as the secondary crisis comes to organizations, schools will be required to demonstrate the value added by in-person, age-graded learning environments. Now given the prevalence of remote learning opportunities, also the flight of resourced students to private and alternative settings, who will choose to teach or to study in the traditional classroom? In short, this crisis brings opportunity for school leadership to effect significant change for the benefit of all students including the most vulnerable. However, organizations that fail to optimize may struggle to survive in the crisis aftermath.

Project Summary

As stated in the introductory chapter, this study purported to explore a relationship between crisis management and social justice educational leadership. Review of the literature from these separate fields generated a conceptual framework that highlighted the importance of organizational learning and criticality for both crisis leadership and social justice leadership. The researcher conducted a qualitative case study of Charlottesville City Schools and its leader Dr. Rosa Atkins in relation to the experience of August, 2017's violent White supremacist demonstrations. The researcher held 17 interviews with 16 participants and collected more than 100 relevant documents primarily from news media and social media sources. Analysis of the data suggested a strong relationship between the two categories, social justice educational leadership and crisis management. But where the researcher had originally intuited social justice leadership as independent variable affecting crisis management, in fact the order of influence

emerged in reverse. Importantly, effective crisis management seemed more to prompt a rise in the exercise of social justice educational leadership.

Final Reflection

The researcher formulated this study in August, 2019, against a backdrop of sociopolitical tension and acts of aggression toward minority people. There were the ICE raids in Mississippi and a mass shooting in Texas. The volatile sociopolitical climate left many school leaders grappling with how to support and protect their full diversity of students in the new school year (Cordova, 2019).

One year later the world is radically different, and yet the same. A global pandemic has exacerbated divisions and further disadvantaged minority groups. Widespread protests following the murder of George Floyd echo a heartbrachingly familiar sentiment: "I can't breathe." In August, 2020, the formal exploration of a relationship between crisis management and social justice leadership seems, tragically, more relevant.

Fortunately this study was rich. An abundance of data yielded several important findings for research and practice as explored in the previous chapter. The findings addressed the domains of crisis, educational leadership, and social justice. They also supported major takeaways and a conclusion that together offer a new lens for viewing crisis events, a way of seeing crisis as hope and opportunity.

This study is dedicated to the memory of Adam Ward, a family friend and someone for whom the researcher and her own school community ache every day. Adam's death was an indirect repercussion of a sociopolitical crisis event. In the wake of the 2015 shooting of nine worshipers at an African American church in Charleston, one man fully failed to regulate his

anger toward the violent racism in the mainstream condition. Upstanding and benevolent Adam was his target. In some ways, he was another victim of the Charleston tragedy.

Remembrance of Adam Ward's life and death is one example, personal to the researcher, that underlines the immense and far-reaching ramifications of racism and other legacies of injustice and oppression. The researcher believes that as we create lasting solutions to injustice we support the self-actualization of all people and a more peaceful world. For educational leaders to understand crisis as loss but also as opportunity for advancing retributive justice, and for them to understand their own promise as agents of change, these are the most powerful implications of the study. The greatest reward of this study would be that these lessons should encourage or inspire educational leaders to further embrace the work.

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APPENDIX A: TYPOLOGY OF DOCUMENTARY DATA

	Pre-Crisis 1/05-7/17	**In-Crisis** 8/17-12/18	**Post-Crisis** 1/19-5/20
Local News Media	"There's still time to fix the city schools" *Cville*, 3/29/05 "Checkered past: Embattled Griffin knows controversy" *The Hook*, 4/21/05 "Blazing a trail" *The Daily Progress*, 12/20/12 "Charlottesville awards diploma 54 years after Massive Resistance" *The Daily Progress*, 5/25/13 "Superintendent Atkins contract extended" *The Daily Progress*, 6/25/13 "Charlottesville schools switch to laptops" *Charlottesville Tomorrow*, 6/4/15 "Charlottesville schools to pilot extended day program for some students" *The Daily Progress*, 9/28/15 "City school board seeks additional funding to expand pre-K" *The Daily Progress*, 1/7/16 "Local schools seek to assist students worried about Trump order"	"Continuing developments following Saturday's violence in Charlottesville" *The Daily Progress*, 8/14/17 "Local schools preparing to address deadly rally" *The Daily Progress*, 8/20/17 "City School Board sympathetic to effort to ban Confederate imagery in dress code" *The Daily Progress*, 9/6/18 "Timing right for anti-racism schools partnership, officials say" *The Daily Progress*, 9/29/18 "Frustration voiced at forum on city schools" *The Daily Progress*, 10/23/18 "City School Board ponders how to gauge achievement gap" *The Daily Progress*, 11/12/18 School Board approves four-year contract with Atkins" *The Daily Progress*, 12/5/18	"City School Board eyes $15 minimum wage for support staff" *The Daily Progress*, 1/19/19 "Surprise, surprise: Councilors Bellamy and Signor will not run for re-election" *Cville*, 3/29/19 "CCS hires first supervisor of equity and inclusion" *The Daily Progress*, 4/25/19 "Committee heading up equity work for Charlottesville schools" *The Daily Progress*, 4/28/19 "Atkins pledges 'very different' Quest after 'incredibly upsetting' letter presented" *The Daily Progress*, 5/2/19 "Charlottesville superintendent to recommend changes to gifted program" *Cville*, 5/6/19 "City school division: Half of teachers hired for next year are minorities" *The Daily Progress*, 5/31/19 "Moving forward: Two years after A12, how do we tell a new story?" *Cville*, 8/7/19 "First-year College student appointed to Virginia African American Advisory Board" *The Cavalier Daily*, 9/2/19 "City school embark on a new quest" *The Daily Progress*, 9/7/19 "Charlottesville Twelve members reflect on integration of schools" *The Daily Progress*, 9/8/19 "Albemarle, Charlottesville kick off history curriculum update" *The Daily Progress*, 9/27/19 "City School Board likes path administration is on to solve student performance issues" *The Daily Progress*, 10/6/19 "Charlottesville's graduation rate 'something to celebrate'" *The Daily Progress*,

	The Daily Progress, 2/4/17		10/8/19 "Unveiling ceremony honors students, parents who desegregated Charlottesville school" *The Daily Progress*, 10/24/19 "Charlottesville school board adopts equity policy" *The Daily Progress*, 11/7/19 "Charlottesville schools hold first Trailblazer Day" *The Daily Progress*, 11/21/19 "Monumental Justice Virginia" *The Daily Progress*, 12/30/19 "What's the state of early education in Charlottesville-Albemarle?" *Charlottesville Tomorrow*, 1/24/20
National / International News Media		"Violent clashes turn deadly in Charlottesville during White nationalist rally" *Time*, 8/12/17 "Documenting hate: A new generation of White supremacists emerges in Charlottesville" *ProPublica*, 8/13/17 "Charlottesville: One killed in violence over US far-right rally." *The BBC*, 8/13/17 "I'm a teacher in Charlottesville. This is how I'll talk to students about what happened." *The Washington Post*, 8/16/17 "Charlottesville will move on" *The New York Times*, 8/18/17 "Chaos breaks out at Charlottesville city council meeting" *The New York Times*,	"Teenager in Charlottesville arrested after racist online threat shuts schools for 2 days" *The New York Times*, 3/22/19 "Why Charlottesville students walked out – and what it will take to keep them from doing it again" *The Washington Post*, 4/2/19 "The 'very fine people' at Charlottesville: Who were they?" *The Washington Post*, 5/8/20

		8/21/17 "Year after White Nationalist rally, Charlottesville is in tug of war over its soul" *The New York Times*, 7/21/18 Charlottesville's first Black female mayor: 'We are not a post-racial nation' *The Guardian*, 8/7/18 "Charlottesville mayor Nikuyah Walker" *CBS News*, 8/12/18 "A year of reckoning in Charlottesville" *The New York Times*, 8/13/18 "'You are still Black': Charlottesville's racial divide hinders students" *The New York Times*, 10/16/18	
CCS Communiques		Joint School Board Response, 8/13/17 *letter* CCS Back to School, 8/20/17 *letter* "Resources for Parents and Educators Following Charlottesville Rally on August 12, 2017" *website*	"Response to White Nationalist Rally in Charlottesville in August, 2017" *website* "Charlottesville City Schools Equity Policy 11/7/19" *policy* "Equity Commitments 2019-2020" *website* "Community Conversations on Equity" Spring, 2020 *flyer* "Statement from the School Board and Superintendent" 5/31/20 *letter*
Social Media	Relevant Twitter Posts, 2015-2016 @CvilleSchools (3) @RAtkinsS (2)	Relevant Twitter Posts, 2017 @CvilleSchools (11) @RAtkinsS (4)	Relevant Twitter Posts, 2019 @CvilleSchools (36) @RAtkinsS (9)

Other Sources		'The day 'Charlottesville' captured new meaning' *Administrator*, 11/17 "Poverty in Charlottesville, VA" *WelfareInfo*, 2017 "Charlottesville's Zyahna Bryant shall lead" *Teaching Tolerance*, 8/10/18	"School Quality Profile: Charlottesville City Schools" *VDOE*, 2019 "Changing the Narrative" *Virginia Humanities*, 2019 "The impact of racism on affordable housing in Charlottesville" *Charlottesville Low-Income Housing Coalition*, 2/20

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT, GENERAL PARTICIPANT

Informed Consent Document
Old Dominion University

PROJECT TITLE
Social Justice Educational Leadership for Contemporary Crisis Management: A Case Study

INTRODUCTION
The purpose of this form is to supply information relevant to your decision whether to participate in a new study in the field of educational leadership, also to make record of participant consent. Please carefully review the form. The researchers invite you to raise any questions before consenting.

RESEARCHERS
Jay Scribner, Ed.D.
Professor, Darden College of Education, Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership

Sara Epperly, Ed.S.
Graduate Student, Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership

STUDY DESCRIPTION
The study explores a relationship between social justice leadership and the management of sociopolitical crisis in contemporary schools. The purpose of the study is to understand how the social justice orientation of a superintendent may have supported a school district's crisis management. The study contributes to the field of educational leadership for its incorporation of a contemporary phenomenon, sociopolitical crisis, as a concern of school leadership. The study also makes unique contribution for its treatment of leadership at the level of the school district superintendency.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION
You are requested to participate in this study for your position as a stakeholder in the Charlottesville City Schools organization, or as a member of the surrounding Charlottesville / Albemarle community having experienced the August, 2017 crisis event. There are no additional criteria for participation. The researchers approximate 12 participants in the study overall.

PARTICIPANT ROLE
If you decide to participate in the study, a researcher will conduct an interview with you. The interview's duration will be approximately one hour, with brief follow up communications likely. The interview will include questions about events of both the Superintendent's tenure and the August, 2017 crisis, as well as your perceptions of events. You will be invited to check and revise your statement or to omit any question from the record. With your permission, we request to audio-record the interview for purpose of accuracy.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Findings of this study may be used in reports and publications in the field of educational leadership. The researchers will make full effort to maintain your anonymity throughout the study, including the attribution of statements and reporting of findings. Specifically, the researchers will ascribe a pseudonym to your statements and will make effort to generalize

other potentially identifying aspects of your role or background. Data will be kept on a secured server accessible only to the researchers. Related material such as analysis and writings will be kept on the secured server until destroyed, according to ODU policy.

RISKS AND BENEFITS
RISKS: There are no foreseen risks to participation in this study. As with any research, there is possibility that participants may be subject to risks not presently identified. If the researchers find new information during the course of the study that would reasonably change your decision to participate, they will provide that information to you.

BENEFITS: There are no direct benefits to participating in this study. The primary benefit to the participant is the opportunity to influence professional and academic conversations regarding educational leadership, social justice, and crisis management through insights provided. There are no monetary benefits associated with participation in the study.

COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS / INJURY
Your consent in this document does not waive any of your legal rights. However, in the event of harm, injury, or illness arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to give you any compensation for such injury.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE
Participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to take part. Should you choose to participate, you may abstain from any question asked of you. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Your data would then be destroyed. A decision to withdraw from the study will not affect your relationship with Old Dominion University.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT
By signing this form, you express agreement with the following conditions: First, you agree to having read the form or having had it read to you. Second, you agree that you understand the contents of the form. Third, you agree that you understand the research study includings its risks and benefits to participants. Again, the researchers invite any questions you may have before your signing of consent. More, the researchers are committed to answering any questions you may have as the study progresses. Please contact:

Jay Scribner, Principal Investigator   Sara Epperly
jscribne@odu.edu (573) 268-4767   seppe002@odu.edu (434) 218-8228

If at any time you feel pressured regarding participation, or if you have any questions about your rights, please contact the chair of the Human Subjects Committee Review Board, Dr. Laura Chezan (lchezan@odu.edu) or the Old Dominion University Office of Research (757-683-3460).

STATEMENT OF CONSENT
I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. By signing below I consent (YES) to take part in the study.

Participant Signature _____ Date _____

Name (printed) _____
INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

I certify I have explained to this subject the nature and purpose of this research, including benefits, risks, costs, and any experimental procedures. I have described the rights and protections afforded to human subjects and have done nothing to pressure, coerce, or falsely entice this subject into participating. I am aware of my obligations under state and federal laws, and promise compliance. I have answered the subject's questions and have encouraged him/her to ask additional questions at any time during the course of this study. I have witnessed the above signature(s) on this consent form.

Investigator's Signature _____ Date _____

Name (printed) _____

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL, GENERAL PARTICIPANT

| Date of Interview: |
| Participant Name: |
| Location: |
| Interview Start / End Times: |

Pre-Interview Script. *I want to thank you again for your willingness to work with me on this study exploring a relationship between school leadership and contemporary crisis management. Specifically this study asks how the priorities and actions of one superintendent may have affected her school division's management of sociopolitical crisis. For your information, Superintendent Atkins approved your name in an extensive list of potential study participants. She will not be made aware of your particular selection for participation in the study. The protection of this identifying information is in effort to establish freedom for your honest reflections. As explained in the informed consent document, your statement will be held confidentially and any attributions made in the final report will prioritize your anonymity. Our interview today will last approximately one hour during which I will ask about events of the Superintendent's tenure including her leadership through the August, 2017 crisis event. The last time we met you completed a consent form indicating I have your permission to audio record our conversation. Are you still comfortable with my recording of our conversation today? [___Yes ___No] Thank you. Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or keep something off record. Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions for me? [Discuss]. Please feel free to ask any questions that may arise over the course of our interview. I will be more than happy to address your questions or concerns. All right, we are ready to begin.*

1) Could you describe your role in relation to the Charlottesville City Schools organization? Please include the duration of your relationship and any changes to your status over time.

2) How would you describe this organization? What are attributes unique to this school division, past and / or present?

3) How do you find the organization has changed over time?
   a) In what ways has the professional staff evolved?
   b) In what ways has the student experience evolved?
   c) Can you identify any reason or cause for these changes?

4) What do you perceive to be the core values of the school division?
   a) In what instances or situations have you perceived these values?
   b) Can you identify their source?
   c) What is the strength of these values across the membership?

5) Reflecting on the Superintendent's fourteen year tenure, what do you perceive as her priorities?

     a) How do you perceive these priorities rank?

     b) How do you perceive these priorities manifest?

6) How would you describe the Superintendent's regard for traditionally marginalized groups? Has she supported them with her work, and how?

     a) How do you feel this mission ranks among the Superintendent's priorities?

7) How does the organization as a whole regard diversity and equity?

     a) Are stakeholders united in their views?

     b) Have stakeholder beliefs changed over time, and how?

     c) How is this regard evident in practice?

8) What school division efforts or initiatives have been most impactful at supporting minority and historically marginalized students toward better educational outcomes?

9) How did the school division experience the August 2017 White supremacist rally?

10) What role did leadership play in the management of this violent sociopolitical crisis in the immediate community?

     a) To what extent was leadership effective in preparing the community for such an event?

     b) To what extent was leadership effective in protecting the organization from damages?

11) What has been the impact of the crisis event on this organization, now more than two years later?

12) What role did organizational learning play in the management of this crisis?

     a) Did learning occur before, during, or after the crisis that influenced the organization's experience of it?

     b) How and to what extent has the Superintendent supported the organization's learning?

13) To conclude, could we return to reflect on the Superintendent's tenure of service to Charlottesville City Schools. What would you consider the highlights or major contributions of her leadership?

     a) Are there low points or struggles you recall?

     b) Does the Superintendent's work suggest any overall contribution or legacy?

Post-Interview Script. *This concludes the directed portion of our interview today. Is there anything else you would like me to know at this time? Anything I did not ask that you would like to share? Or do you have any questions for me? Are you aware of any documents or artifacts that might be considered as study data? Again, I want to express my thanks for your generosity of time and energy toward this project.*

APPENDIX D: INFORMED CONSENT, PRINCIPAL PARTICIPANT

Informed Consent Document
Old Dominion University

PROJECT TITLE
Social Justice Educational Leadership for Contemporary Crisis Management: A Case Study

INTRODUCTION
The purpose of this form is to supply information relevant to your decision whether to participate in a new study in the field of educational leadership, also to make record of your consent. Please carefully review the form. The researchers invite you to raise any questions before consenting.

RESEARCHERS
Jay Scribner, Ed.D.
Professor, Darden College of Education, Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership

Sara Epperly, Ed.S.
Graduate Student, Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership

STUDY DESCRIPTION
The study explores a relationship between social justice leadership and the management of sociopolitical crisis in contemporary schools. The purpose of the study is to understand how the social justice orientation of a superintendent may have supported a school district's crisis management. The study contributes to the field of educational leadership for its incorporation of a contemporary phenomenon, sociopolitical crisis, as a concern of school leadership. The study also makes unique contribution for its treatment of leadership at the level of the school district superintendency.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION
You are requested to participate in this study for your position as leader of the Charlottesville City Schools organization. There are no additional criteria for your participation. Other organizational and community stakeholders will be invited to participate in the study. The researchers approximate 12 participants in the study overall.

PARTICIPANT ROLE
If you decide to participate in the study, a researcher will conduct multiple interviews with you. The duration of these interviews will total approximately 6-12 hours, with brief follow up communications likely. The interview will include questions about events of your tenure with the organization including the August, 2017 crisis event. You will be invited to check and revise your statements and/or to omit any question from the record. With your permission, we request to audio-record the interview for purpose of accuracy. Additionally, the researcher requests to observe you at work for a total of 6-12 hours across two sessions. During the observations, the researcher will record topic-related field notes.

CONFIDENTIALITY
The findings of this study may be used in reports and publications in the field of educational leadership. For the broadly-known nature of case events, the researchers cannot guarantee

your anonymity with this study. However, the researchers will make full effort to maintain anonymity for all other study participants. More, collected data will be kept on a secured server accessible only to the researchers. Related material such as analysis and writings will be kept on the secured server until destroyed, according to ODU policy.

RISKS AND BENEFITS
RISKS: There are no foreseen risks to participation in this study. As with any research, there is possibility that participants may be subject to risks not presently identified. If the researchers find new information during the course of the study that would reasonably change your decision to participate, they will provide that information to you.

BENEFITS: There are no direct benefits to participating in this study. The primary benefit to the participant is the opportunity to influence professional and academic conversations regarding educational leadership, social justice, and crisis management through insights provided. There are no monetary benefits associated with participation in the study.

COMPENSATION FOR ILLNESS / INJURY
Your consent in this document does not waive your legal rights. However, in the event of harm, injury, or illness arising from this study, neither Old Dominion University nor the researchers are able to give you any compensation for such injury.

WITHDRAWAL PRIVILEGE
Participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to take part. Should you choose to participate, you may abstain from any question asked of you. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Your data would then be destroyed. A decision to withdraw from the study will not affect your relationship with Old Dominion University.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT
By signing this form, you express agreement with the following conditions: First, you agree to having read the form or having had it read to you. Second, you agree that you understand the contents of the form. Third, you agree that you understand the research study includings its risks and benefits to participants. Again, the researchers invite any questions you may have before your signing of consent. More, the researchers are committed to answering any questions you may have as the study progresses. Please contact:

Jay Scribner, Principal Investigator   Sara Epperly
jscribne@odu.edu (573) 268-4767   seppe@odu.edu (434) 218-8228

If at any time you feel pressured regarding participation, or if you have any questions about your rights, please contact the chair of the Human Subjects Committee Review Board, Dr. Laura Chezan (lchezan@odu.edu) or the Old Dominion University Office of Research (757-683-3460).

STATEMENT OF CONSENT
I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. By signing below I consent (YES) to take part in the study.

Participant Signature _____ Date_____

Name (printed) _____

INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

I certify I have explained to this subject the nature and purpose of this research, including benefits, risks, costs, and any experimental procedures. I have described the rights and protections afforded to human subjects and have done nothing to pressure, coerce, or falsely entice this subject into participating. I am aware of my obligations under state and federal laws, and promise compliance. I have answered the subject's questions and have encouraged him/her to ask additional questions at any time during the course of this study. I have witnessed the above signature(s) on this consent form.

Investigator's Signature _____ Date _____

Name (printed) _____

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL, PRINCIPAL PARTICIPANT

Principal Participant Interview, Part I: Background / Life Experience / Motivations

Pre-Interview Script: *Dr. Atkins, I would like to thank you again, for your willingness to work with me on this study exploring a relationship between school leadership and contemporary crisis management.*

Specifically this study asks how the priorities and actions of one superintendent may have affected her school division's management of sociopolitical crisis. I have prepared an interview of approximately two hours. I will begin the interview with questions about your personal background, your values, and your professional journey. A second part of the interview treats your leadership priorities and initiatives in Charlottesville. A third part specifically addresses the crisis events of fall 2017. Finally I hope to share some emergent study findings and to hear your impressions and feedback.

Before we begin, I have shared with you a consent form. I know you have returned it to me, but do you have any questions with respect to your role in the study? Most importantly, this study does not seek to protect your identity. It appreciates unique power in the case of Charlottesville, therefore names the division and you its leader. I have interviewed 15 other stakeholders of the organization and their contributions to the study will be anonymously held - but it seems somewhat impossible to mask your identity because of the notoriety of the case. That said, I do plan to preview findings with you and I can do that today. I don't anticipate you will object to the study results or report...

I would also like to audio record our conversation. The purpose of the audio recording is the ability to generate an accurate transcription for later analysis. I would plan to send you the transcript in the next few days, for any additions or redactions you might like to make. Are you still comfortable with me recording our conversation today? Thank you. Please let me know if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder.

At this point, do you have any questions for me? I will be happy to address your questions or concerns at any point. Of course you know we can break at any time, if the conversation gets too long or something comes up. Please know that I am so honored to speak with you - this is a great opportunity for me and for this study. All right, I think we are ready to begin.

1) How did you experience schooling as an African American female student growing up in Virginia and preparing for your own future?

    a) Did you feel the adversity of racism or marginalization? How and to what effect?

b) What events or forces in your life led you toward a career in the field of education?

2) Could you describe the course of your career in education?

    a) What values were you pursuing as you moved from one position to another and up the school leadership hierarchy?

3) When you critically regarded the organizations you served, what strengths and what needs were you able to identify?

    a) How did you direct your energy in these different organizations?

4) These strengths and needs you named, do you find they apply across the field of education and public schooling generally? That is, how do you find the state of K-12 public education in the United States? What is exciting to you, and what is concerning?

5) How do you feel contemporary schools do toward supporting the success and wellbeing of students representing historically marginalized groups?

    a) How do you understand the struggle of minoritized students in schools, documented in performance gaps, dropout rates, or over-representation in disciplinary actions?
    b) What do you feel is the importance of academic achievement for student outcomes overall?

6) What evidence of oppression or injustice do you identify in schools today?

    a) Do you feel circumstances of historic oppression are relevant to the experience of today's students, and how?

7) What are your priorities and / or strategies for supporting traditionally disadvantaged students?

    a) How do you value inclusive services with respect to these students? What does inclusion mean to you?

8) We have discussed motivating factors that brought you to this work. But would you ascribe a particular mission to your work, and what?

9) As leader, what strategies have you pursued toward accomplishing that mission?

    a) Which strategies have been most successful? Have any failed?
    b) Have you faced resistance to your mission and pursuits? How?

10) How do you find your personal racial identity affects your efforts toward that mission?

    a) Does your racial identity affect your understanding of forces affecting minority students, and how?
    b) … affect your motivation?
    c) … affect your credibility?
    d) … affect your relationships?

11) Thinking back to your arrival at Charlottesville City Schools in summer, 2006, what were notable characteristics of the organization? Could you describe any circumstances - strengths, weaknesses, or otherwise - that drew your attention in the beginning?

    a) How did the school division's historical pretext, for example its history of massive resistance, influence your understanding of the organization?

12) So given, did you come to Charlottesville with any particular mission or plan for transformation of the organization?

    a) Were you hired to pursue any mission upheld by the school board, etc?
    b) How did you reveal this mission to stakeholders, and how was it received?

13) There is evidence of rising tension and separation around issues of diversity in greater society. How have you perceived the political and social climate over the decades of your career?

    a) How have these dynamics played out among stakeholders in your organizations, including among students?
    b) How have sociopolitical tensions affected your leadership activity?

14) Related, what do you feel is the relationship between school climate and student success?

    a) How can educational leaders establish positive learning environments for diverse students in a greater context of tension and political divide?

15) What role have interpersonal relationships played in your work?

16) How have you built the capacity of your organization, developed your people and helped your organization grow, with respect to issues of social justice and equity over the course of the year?

17) Which social justice efforts do you find to have had greatest impact on the success and wellbeing of Charlottesville's historically marginalized students to date?

    a) What change, if any, do you feel you've helped consolidate in the communities in which you've served?

Principal Participant Interview, Part 2: Fall 2017 Crisis Events and Management

18) How do you understand the Fall of 2017 so far as crisis events affecting the commuity… their nature and its source?

    a) Were these event a surprise to you?

19) To what extent do you feel your organization was prepared for a crisis of this kind?

    a) What pre-crisis events or activities may have supported the organization's crisis preparedness?
    b) How do you relate your specific leadership efforts to the organization's crisis preparedness?

20) Could you recall your experience of this event, what took place so far as you and your organization were concerned?

    a) Could you recall your crisis decision-making? That is, asked to describe your management of the crisis event, which actions and decisions would you cite?

    b) Discuss the role, if any, of democratic processes in managing the crisis?

21) What was the potential cost to your organization of such a crisis, in a worst-case scenario?

    a) Ultimately, what cost or detriment did the organization sustain?

22) Were there benefits to the organization brought about by the crisis, and how so?

23) Has the organization changed since the Fall, 2017 crisis event, and how?

    a) Did the crisis event change you, your leadership, your priorities, and how?
    b) How do you attribute these changes?

24) Generally speaking, and considering both pre- and post-crisis developments, how do you assess your management of this crisis occurrence?

    a) Have you been successful? What evidence suggests this?
    b) Has the organization in any way benefited from the crisis event, and how?

25) The crisis literature emphasizes critical reflection and organizational learning as necessary to successful crisis management. Can you explain the role organizational learning played in Charlottesville City Schools' management of this crisis? How have stakeholders been growing and changing?

    a) At what points in time did relevant learning occur?
    b) At what levels did learning occur? And how did it occur?
    c) What was your role in facilitating the organization's learning?
    d) Do you feel organizational learning contributed to any transformation of the organization?

26) What lessons in leadership, if any, have you discerned now several years after the event? Lessons you feel might be transferable to other educational leaders...

    a) Lessons for crisis leadership?
    b) Lessons for social justice leadership?

27) How do you find the current health of your organization and what are your next objectives?

28) I wonder if you could reflect over the course of your now 14 year tenure at Charlottesville City Schools. What do you feel are highlights of your experience with this organization?

    a) Are there any low-lights you would be willing to share?

Post-Interview Script. *This concludes the directed portion of our interview today. Is there anything else you would like me to know, anything relevant we have not discussed? Are you aware of any documents or artifacts that you feel would contribute to the study?*

Researcher reflection on study findings.

Again, I want to express my deep appreciation for your generosity of time and energy to this project.