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EXPLORING THE INCONGRUENCE BETWEEN TRADITIONAL NEO-MANAGERIAL
NORMS, THE SCIENCE OF LEARNING, AND THE GOALS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE: A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF EDUCATORS LIVED EXPERIENCES INSIDE THIS
PARADOX

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY
August 2021

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ABSTRACT

EXPLORING THE INCONGRUENCE BETWEEN TRADITIONAL NEO-MANAGERIAL NORMS, THE SCIENCE OF LEARNING, AND THE GOALS OF SOCIAL JUSTICE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF EDUCATORS LIVED EXPERIENCES INSIDE THIS PARADOX

Donica Ouckama Hadley
Old Dominion University, 2021
Chair: Dr. Steven Myran

While some scholars have critiqued the continued dominance of scientific management on how we conceptualize and run schools (Cuban, 1990; Myran & Sutherland, 2019; Tyack & Cuban, 1995), it remains the dominant paradigm, and even with some surface level structural changes, these have had little impact on the undergirding theories that shape the field (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998; Cuban 2012, Tyack & Cuban, 1995). However, what is particularly troubling, is that scientific management as the dominant theory of action is more grounded in principles of efficiency and uniformity than principles of human agency, learning, equity, and social justice, and therefore is antithetical to the goals of contemporary schooling. This incongruence puts reform minded educators in the middle of a paradox of competing values and theories.

While there is a rich literature on these related topics, we know little about how educators navigate this theorized paradox. Without such an exploration we run the risk of unknowingly reinforcing and perpetuating the well-established patterns of failed reform efforts. This study explores the lived experiences of teachers and school leaders involved in a district level equity initiative and how they navigated these competing values.

Using a phenomenological research approach designed to explore this social and psychological phenomena from the perspective of the people experiencing it (Douglas &

Moustakas, 1985), I closely examine the lived experiences (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) of the people whose workplaces them within this theorized paradox. Taken together, the findings suggest that the theorized paradox described by Myran & Sutherland (2019) is clearly seen as real amongst these educators. The participants described the structures and practices of school improvement as representing a number of tensions between the historically rooted pull to manage, control, and direct the school environment, and their social justice driven impulse to engage, explore, build safe and trusting relationships, and to learn and grow. As one participant said, *If we say that we believe all children can learn at high levels, yet we implement practices that prevent our marginalized groups from doing so, leaders must feel safe being able to challenge these practices.*

Study findings highlight that educators actively working within the tensions of this paradox were passionate about the need to ground this important work in mindfulness and the creation, protection, and maintenance of safe spaces to navigate the dangers they experienced. They emphasized the importance of building trusting relationships, to expand their cultural awareness and skills in equity building, to develop the mindset to critically examine the norms and traditions of our field, and to better recognize and identify systemic barriers. Leading with learning and social justice informed theories of action offer a far more appropriate and congruent basis for improvement. The findings of this study offer insights on how educators are finding their way through the tensions of this paradox.

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This dissertation is dedicated to all the students, teachers and educators whom I have had the pleasure of working with over the past twenty-two years. I am forever inspired by the work I have been able to do as an educator, because of the people I have encountered along the way. You are my “*why*.” I continue to learn so I can do my part in making this world a better place through the gift of education. Education is truly a gift and ALL kids deserve it! Though my part in helping is small, even the small parts count. I aspire to continue to positively uplift and empower as an educator for each and every one of you, in hopes that you will then pay it forward and keep the momentum of positive change going.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My dissertation journey has been a very personal one for me. When I began this journey, I set out to “re-establish” my place and purpose as an educator after taking a brief hiatus from the workplace to focus on raising a family. What I did not take into account was the amount of people whom I would not only meet, but who would walk beside me on this journey. The dissertation journey is not a journey anyone ever does alone, and mine was no exception.

I would first like to extend my gratitude and appreciation to my chair, Dr. Steven Myran. Dr. Myran has been a phenomenal part of my journey and I will forever be grateful for his support and guidance. I am so thankful for the numerous conversations and countless hours of reading and offering feedback as I navigated this entire process. Dr. Myran pushed my thinking as my professor and as my chair, but most importantly as a scholar and mentor. Thank you also to Dr. Myran for introducing me to my committee of Dr. Judith Dunkerly-Bean and Dr. Kala Burrell-Craft. I am forever grateful for their support and feedback and appreciate both of their willingness to read and offer suggestions and advice to continue to push my thinking forward.

I am also grateful for the circle of professionals I encountered at Old Dominion University. I had truly incredible and knowledgeable professors that guided my journey and pushed me as an educator in ways I could never even have imagined. A very special thank you and “shout-out” to my family of Cohort 3. I am extremely thankful and proud to have been a member of such a supportive community of professionals. You all continually encouraged, empowered and embraced the journey right alongside of me, and I will be forever grateful for all of our paths having crossed.

I am also thankful for the support of my family and friends. I thank my “circle” for always understanding when I needed to write and reminding me that they will be there at the

finish line. This is when I truly began to realize that this journey was more than a personal journey. I am truly thankful to have a circle of friends who constantly and consistently encouraged me to keep moving forward. I can finally say, it's time to plan "the trip!"

An incredibly special thank you to my parents, Donald & Valerie Ouckama. Your individual life stories and your collective energy as a couple continue to serve as some of the biggest sources of encouragement, empowerment and inspiration in my life. I recognize this accomplishment as an extension of our family story. Thank you for providing me with the foundation of unconditional love and support. I would also like to thank my sisters, Marisa and Tammy, their families, my extended family and my in-laws for their constant support and words of encouragement. This journey would not have been possible without each and every one of you.

I would like to especially thank my three children, Logan, Braden and Jack. This was truly a family effort. There were countless hours and nights of "Mom's Office Hours." These office hours meant we were "all in" for the past four years. You three were ALWAYS the motivation that kept me going. Every word I wrote was to symbolize what it means to set a goal and follow it through to the end. Finish lines are not always instantaneous and often are only crossed with hard work and sacrifice. Every milestone of this journey we celebrated together. This is as much your finish line as it is mine.

Finally, I would not have even been writing these acknowledgements if it wasn't for my husband, Mark. You encouraged me to enter this journey when I was too terrified to even begin it. You believed in me even when I didn't. Your endless support, unconditional love and constant encouragement was always my fuel to see this journey all the way to the end. This just

gets added to the list of everything I love about you. This journey is part of our story. Thank you, with all my heart, for helping me write this chapter.

“She believed she could and so she did.”

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CHAPTER 1

The spring and summer of 2020 should mark a point in America's history where ignoring overt and subtle forms of institutional racism will hopefully be a practice of the past. The combination of a global pandemic that has differentially impacted Black Americans in terms of economics and health, and the brutal and very public killing of George Floyd, have created a catalyst for the acknowledgement of institutionalized racism that calls for widespread social reform. In the post George Floyd educational context, educators, students, policy makers, parents and community members will be called on to examine the issues of equity and social justice in far more intentional and actionable ways. Scholars, practitioners, and past reform efforts have long advocated for more equitable and socially just schools. However, this work has either been an afterthought, pushed to the periphery or all together dismissed. Critical race theorists, for example, have openly rejected the deficit discourse and epistemic injustice present in the scientific management and neo-managerial norms of the field and have sought to disrupt structural racism (Joseph, 2020; Solorzano & Yosso, 2012). Critical Race Theory (CRT) offers a lens that allows us to recognize that the dominant scientific management and neo-managerial norms and traditions that shape our field are antithetical to the goals of equity and social justice, and yet these historic foundations continue to shape the dominant leadership and administration paradigms (Myran & Sutherland, 2019).

Almost 70 years ago, the cognitive revolution presented evidence which shifted the conceptualization of the learner from a passive recipient to an active participant (Myran & Sutherland, 2019). This shift moves us to what might be thought of as a human agency orientation that recognizes that without active and deliberate agency, substantive, lasting and transferable knowledge cannot be fully realized. In this way, the field is currently in a paradigm

shift where students should no longer be viewed as passive recipients within the learning process (Lac & Baxley, 2019; Lac & Cumings Mansfield, 2017). Such a human agency orientation has critical implications for equity and social justice because knowledge has material, economic, social, political, civic and symbolic value, and access to instructional climates that support one's agency is a fundamental social justice issue. Importantly, the learning sciences research highlights that knowledge is constructed through the learner's deliberate and active behaviors in a reciprocal interaction between their propensities as learners, their prior knowledge and schema and the social and educational context (Alexander, Schallert and Reynolds 2009; Bandura, 1978). In this way a socially just outlook on learning isn't merely that all people should have access to existing standards of knowledge and the instrumental structures that treat learning as something that can be given and received, but invited to become members of the community of knowers who actively engage in constructing, co-constructing and reconstructing knowledge in new and innovative ways. Members of a community of knowers are valued for their pluralistic and dynamic outlooks rather than pressured to passively conform to existing canons of knowledge (Adams & Myran, 2021).

Given the above critique, this requires school leaders to disrupt a pattern of leadership (Lac & Baxley, 2019; Lak & Cumings Mansfield, 2017) that has been rooted in scientific management dating back to the Industrial Era. In this way, the aspects of the dominant paradigm that shape how we conceptualize, design and enact our roles as educators and educational leaders is antithetical to both the mission of social justice and equity and the science of the very thing we seek to have influence over, student learning (Myran & Sutherland, 2019). Schools continue to operate through policies, practices and bureaucratic structures (Callahan, 1964; Willower, 1973) which insinuate students are products designed to merely receive information. In actuality,

student learning is understood to be shaped by the active and deliberate agency of the individual student in reciprocal interaction with peers and their instructors. Effective instruction is then dependent, in part, on the structures provided that scaffold and support this kind of reciprocal interaction among active and autonomous learners and their teachers. This illuminates the dynamic conflict between standardized authoritative efforts (Au, 2011; Ravitch, 2016) and opportunities for students to be co-constructors of learning (Myran & Sutherland, 2019). Present day schools are now, more than ever, facing a period of time when imposed rigid scripted curricula (Sawyer, 2004) and other mandates designed to disempower the discretionary authority of teachers and leaders (Boote, 2006; Erickson, 2007) serve as barriers to learning and positive change efforts. These conflicts pose a direct hindrance for positive change efforts to be implemented, and ultimately sustained, which is an under explored area within research.

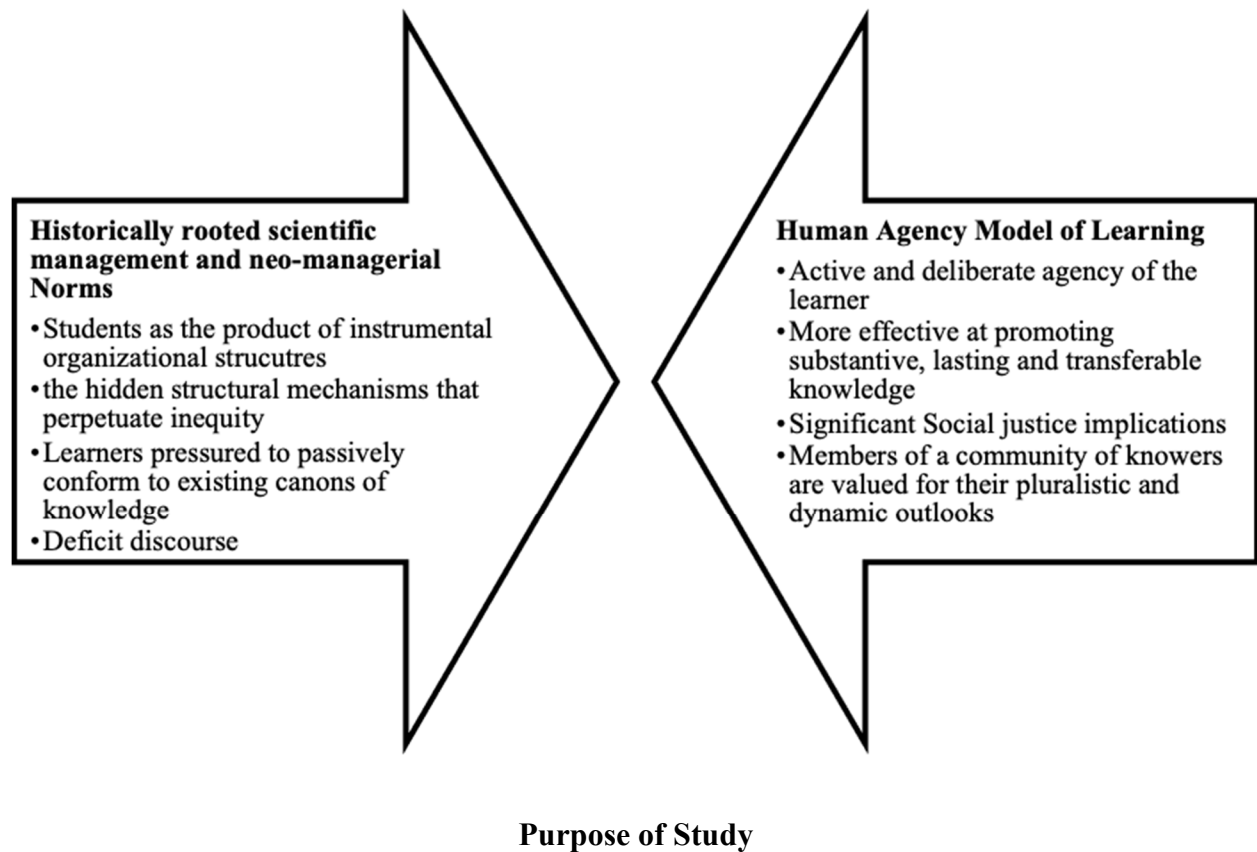
Statement of the Problem

Historically, reform and improvement efforts have focused primarily on improving the productivity and efficiency of school structures and its workforce, and even the “products” themselves. This normative, neo-managerial climate serves as a barrier to our collective recognition of one potential source of the unruly resistance to deep systemic change and improvement, hence the incongruence between these normative structures and values and a human-agency based perspective on learning and social justice. Historical reform efforts have presented patterns of ineffective sustainable change efforts. Arguably, school systems cannot afford to operate within these incongruencies, as sustainable change efforts are highly needed to successfully navigate the social justice inequities identified and perpetuated by current policies and practices. America’s public school system cannot afford to repeatedly engage in ineffective reform efforts (Cuban, 1990). While there is rich literature on these related topics, we know little

about how educators navigate this theorized paradox (see Figure 1). In an attempt to successfully navigate the present day reform effort of building a more equitable and socially just public school system, one must first understand what it means to navigate the identified competing values within the system.

Figure 1

A Theorized Paradox Between Dominant Neo-Managerial Norms and a Human Agency Orientation



The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of teachers and school leaders in how they navigate the competing values of neo-managerial influenced school improvement efforts, a human agency outlook about learning, and social justice and equity based practice and outlooks. In order for teachers and school leaders to best be prepared to lead schools

through social justice reform and school improvement efforts, they must first understand the challenges they truly face in order to be productively and effectively responsive to the need for change (Brown, 2004).

Research Questions:

What are the lived experiences of educators in how they navigate the competing values in the theoretical paradox in the context of school improvement?

- a. How do educators describe the structures and practices of school improvement?
- b. How do educators define or describe learning?
- c. How do educators define or describe social justice?
- d. Do educators experience this paradox through their shared stories?
- e. If so, what is the impact of that recognition?
- f. How do educators cope with the implicit or explicit recognition of this paradox?

Rationale and Significance

During the post George Floyd era, specifically within the context of education, it will be critical for educators and students alike to do more than simply “tinker towards utopia” (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). First, we have to recognize and understand how little school practices have changed (Tyack & Tobin, 1994), as this has presented patterns of incongruency repeated from one major school reform effort and initiative after the other. We are in a period of American history when a just society can no longer afford continued failed reform efforts, specifically in the area of social justice and equitable practices. Since the cognitive revolution we have come to understand the importance of human agency. Furthermore, the social justice movement, particularly drawing from Critical Race Theory, has offered insights on the hidden, unseen and often unspoken structural mechanisms that perpetuate inequity. While not always framed in the same spaces, together these two perspectives offer a potentially useful holistic outlook about human agency; one from a learning perspective and the other from a social justice and equity perspective. If social justice advocates hope to dismantle structural racism and reinvent schools to meet the learning needs of all students, we need to move beyond what Bowers (1997) described as pre-ecological thinking and deepen our exploration and understanding of this paradox. Without a means to exploring the field’s assumptions, norms, metaphors, stories, language and structures, our efforts to bring about lasting and meaningful reform that creates equitable and valuable learning opportunities for all students, we run the risk of reinforcing the very assumptions and practices that are currently the foundation of the neo-managerial norms. Within these neo-managerial norms and traditions lie barriers and obstacles that are holding us back from real, sustainable, long-overdue school improvement.

Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of this dissertation, critical theory is used as the overarching theoretical framework for which to further understand the lived experiences of teachers and school leaders and how they navigate the paradox outlined above. Critical theory is a theory grounded in the everyday lives of people (Brown, 2004); a social theory that focuses on going past the surface level of life issues in order to attempt to make visible, invisible questions and assumptions that therefore serve as problems and barriers in change efforts (Brown, 2004). More specifically, critical theory seeks to decrease human oppression while increasing various forms of freedom (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2010). Therefore, critical theory is being used to emphasize how the “ideas, policies and practices” that benefit and pay homage to the dominant class “simultaneously dehumanizes others” (Brown, 2004, p. 78).

In addition to this, critical theory is being used to understand the neo-managerialism in which school leaders continue to operate, therefore exploring the potential need for change in the roles and responsibilities of school leaders (Brown 2004). Brown (2004) acknowledges how critical theory “recognizes and advocates for the social change role and responsibility of educational leaders” (p.78). In this way, critical theory serves as a tool to help understand how the role of values such as power and authority impact structures, in order to challenge them and ultimately advocate for change (Brown, 2004). Critical theory seeks to examine and critique change, unlike traditional theory which seeks to explain change (Bohman, 2016).

Historically, America is a country that has and continues to utilize race to create a system of hierarchy, superiority and value based distinctively on skin color, culture and ethnicity (Kendi, 2016; Reynolds & Kendi, 2020). Over time, this system has been normalized and used to influence the social, economic, political and legal climates that permeate almost every aspect

of America's society, including America's public school system (Reynolds & Kendi, 2020). As a result, these normalized values, beliefs, and structures become largely invisible to the passive observer. Stemming from critical theory, critical race theory (CRT) is a theoretical framework born shortly after the Civil Rights Era in the early 70s. During this time period, it became evident that American laws and policies functioned in a way that was at a disadvantage to people of color (Johnson-Ahorlu, 2017). CRT evolved from a theory to a movement as activists and scholars further studied this theory (Delgado & Stefanic, 2017) for the purpose of "transforming the relationship among race, racism and power" (p. 3). Given these hidden values, beliefs, and structures, critical race theory can be used as a means of exposing and understanding the root causes of systemic racism and can help to explain how racism continues to not only permeate but drive the dominant society while simultaneously serving as oppressive to those who are identified as being marginalized.

Critical Race Theory is a framework in which to further examine and explore the patterns and practices of inequity within the education system. The primary purpose of also using CRT is to further emphasize the urgency in prioritizing social justice reform efforts within our schools. For the purpose of this paper, CRT will be used as a lens to further understand how educators experience the identified paradox of navigating traditions and norms while attempting to bring forth sustainable and necessary change efforts, specifically in the area of social justice. CRT will be used to seek to understand and therefore attempt to explain how the lived experiences of teachers and school leaders are affected by the competing values within power structures and whether or not these power structures explicitly and/or implicitly impact teachers and school leaders alike, which ultimately impacts learning. Together CT and CRT will be "interwoven" in order to increase awareness, acknowledgement, and action in school improvement efforts in

terms of social justice. This dissertation attempts to combine these theoretical frameworks in order to best support an alternative and transformative pedagogy where students, teachers and school leaders, alike begin “to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Friere, 1994, p. 17), specifically in the area of social justice.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This phenomenological study is designed to address a theorized paradox. This literature review will begin by describing reform efforts that are deemed both successful and unsuccessful in order to provide a foundational context. The review will first identify the origin and evolution of reform efforts within America's schools during the early establishment years. The next part of the review will focus on how school leadership, rooted in scientific management during the early years of establishment, continues to operate in this neo-managerial way. Subsequently, as schools and learning have navigated school improvement efforts to meet the changing needs of each consecutive era, educators and school leaders have had to navigate a system of norms and traditions that are antithetical to a research-based cognitive approach towards learning. As such, the review of literature also addresses the science of learning and post-cognitive revolution theories of learning. In addition, the review explores the implications of this historic exploration for social justice.

Elements of critical theory will be threaded throughout the review to identify the roles power and oppression have played and continue to play in school improvement efforts. Specifically, critical theory will be used to identify the actors and clarify their roles within these change efforts. Additionally, elements of critical race theory will be used as a lens to further examine the historical social injustices that have led to systematic racial injustices. This review is intended to synthesize patterns and characteristics of successful, failed and evolved reform efforts and the role educators play within these change efforts. The intent of this review is to shed light on how examining past reform efforts can perhaps be useful when paired with the

lived experiences of educators and school leaders. Subsequently, the purpose is to utilize findings to influence positive and productive change efforts within school systems, specifically in the area of social justice efforts. This is of importance and relevance as school systems will inevitably embark upon these reform efforts during this present day post George Floyd era.

Scientific Management's Influence on Schooling and Administration

History of Scientific Management

During the early 1900's, Frederick W. Taylor designed an organized work system based on an "efficiency model" known as scientific management (Tyack, 1974). Due to the fact that scientific management continues to be influential in today's schooling and administration, it is critical to understand and reflect on the origins of these roots. Taylor's theory of 'scientific management' grew from the industrial era. This theory of management was built upon the concept of the system being more important than the people within the system (Grachev & Ratisky, 2013). The time period is critical as industrial businesses, including factories, served as the primary sources of employment. Thus, the workforce served as menial labor and leaders served as managers. Managers were tasked with increasing productivity by ensuring efficiency through "manipulation and mastery" (Grachev & Ratisky, 2013; Kaestle, 1983) and the workforce was viewed as requiring being mastered and manipulated. Grachev and Ratisky (2013) further emphasized that this model, born in the industrial era, primarily shifted the responsibility from individuals to management. It is important to take into account the organizational type and time period when analyzing the effectiveness of scientific management.

Taylor's 'scientific' approach to management was proven to be highly effective in running a business, despite the decrease in value towards humanity. The principles of scientific management emphasize a standardized method of production within the workforce, harmony and

cooperation between management and workers, and the development of individual workers to the greatest of his/her capacity (Taylor, 1919). These principles reinforce its effectiveness and success within the industrial workforce. Wrege and Hodggetts (2000), along with Kemp (2013) noted that the principles within this particular theory of management were successful because they ultimately were designed and based on the concept of “increasing productivity levels.”

The concept of scientific management is rooted in the belief in superiority, and in turn, this theory of leadership reinforces those who serve beneath management as not being capable of the same level of understanding (Myran and Sutherland, 2019; Tyack, 1974) or merit. Firstly, decisions within scientific management consisted of managerial ideas that did not take into account the workforce principles. In addition to this, the workforce is scientifically selected to perform in a manner that allows maximal productivity or job performance. Furthermore, scientific management thrives on managers planning, organizing and dispensing orders while the workforce executes plans and orders in a specialized manner that ensures efficiency with minimal room for error. Finally, harmony is achieved when the workforce effectively and efficiently performs tasks and carries out managerial decisions in a manner that is compliant and without questioning. In this aspect, both the workforce and management reap the benefits as increased profits for management results in steady wages for the workforce. All this being said, the principles of scientific management appear, at a quick glance, to lead to success within an organization.

A closer look at scientific management, however, would indicate that in spite of its success rate, specifically within industrial organizations, there were in fact downfalls to this theory of management. Scientific management was built on the principle of superiority in terms of management versus workforce. Again, Grachev and Rakitsky (2013) emphasize how this

scientific approach towards management shifted the overall responsibility from the individual to management. Along with this shift, came a mental shift, also referred to as a mental revolution, which relied on the fact that management and workforce needed to work in a complementary relationship of trust and confidence in one another's role within the organization (Wagner-Tsukamoto, 2008). This relationship, however, does not take into account that there is any source of knowledge base, perspective or opinions from the workforce, individually or collectively. This fact alone, can be described as dehumanizing and demoralizing as the sustainability of an organization depends upon submissiveness and control. Both of these characteristics are incongruent to human development and growth. Therefore, upon taking a deeper look at the theory of leadership prescribed to build an 'engaging and humane' workforce and work environment, there is evidence of this leadership theory also being rooted in devaluing humanity.

Frederick Taylor's theory of scientific management revolutionized the industrial workforce during the same time period when Howard Mann decided to lead a crusade of revolutionizing public education in America (Cohen & Mehta, 2017). This is a critical parallel in timing in that the aforementioned strongly influenced the latter. Mann's mission for schooling to become more 'engaging and humane' (Cohen & Mehta, 2017), coincided with a time period where there was a shift from an industrial based economy to a technological based economy. The shift in economy did not, however, shift the continuation of the use of scientific management as the primary theory, and therefore, method of leadership.

Research indicates that the success of scientific management within businesses served as a justifiable reason to utilize the same theory of management within schools (Tyack, 1974). This rationalization paved the way for schools to operate and be managed, or led, in a manner similar

to the infrastructures of industrial organizations, efficient and uniform (Callahan, 1964; Myran & Sutherland, 2019; Tyack, 1974; Tyack & Cuban, 1995). This is important to note in that it sheds light on the fact that America's public school systems have roots in scientific management principles. The leadership used and applied within school organizations mirrored the system of scientific management that emerged and was proven effective in leading industrial organizations. An identified problem with this continuation of management is that it does not take into account that the purpose and goals within the organization no longer reflect the needs of industrial organizations. As school systems shifted from standardization to specialization (Myran & Sutherland, 2019), the purpose of learning began to evolve. The management system tasked to lead this evolution of learning, contradictorily, remained rooted and unchanged.

A more in depth look into the purpose of public schools during this time period indicates that increased access to public school education was more than merely preparing children to work in factories. However, the purpose of learning within the American school system was not necessarily to create individuals who were critical thinkers or creative problem solvers. American schools were tasked with developing and increasing the American workforce. This resulted in the value of education increasing as the value in developing job readiness skills beyond factory work was universally recognized. Cohen and Mehta (2017) reinforce this by acknowledging the emphasis of mechanical recitation and the importance of learning to follow directions and respect authority (McNutt, 2018) through a management model that was deemed to be efficient. In this way, America's free and public school system began to evolve as priorities evolved within the nation's cultural and societal needs; shifting from standardization to specialization. The emphasis on what was deemed important to learn in school appeared to align with the same principles scientific management emphasized in the industrial workplace.

The purpose of learning was merely to perform, as opposed to having a purpose of attaining critical thinking skills in order to generate and apply knowledge.

Scientific management placed an emphasis on the “structures, schedules and regimens” (Myran & Sutherland, 2019, p. 664). These infrastructures have since translated into some of the norms and traditions identified in present day schools. The norms and traditions that permeated schools during the industrial era are arguably still present in the organization. Some examples of these norms and traditions are current practices such as how students are classified by grade levels and content is placed into silos known as ‘subjects’ (Tyack & Tobin, 1994). Some of these norms and traditions are deeper and less overt such as how the leadership of these infrastructures continues to “manage” schools as organizations tasked with producing learners. In this way, the values of power and authority primarily reside in management, which in turn indirectly and directly impacts student learning. In this way, schools are operating within a system that is merely tasked with “producing” learners within norms and traditions that will prove to no longer reflect the changing needs of learners within present day society. This can indeed result in a problematic infrastructure in need of ‘careful reexamination’ (Sutherland & Myran, 2019).

What Scientific Management Implies About Learning

The interconnection and interdependence of leadership and learning are critical to identify in order to fully comprehend the indirect and direct influence of scientific management on learning. For the purpose of this dissertation, learning, as defined by Myran and Sutherland (2019) is “the complex, interrelated, dynamic, reciprocal, and iterative interaction between and among the learners’ active agency and introspective capabilities within the context of their micro and macro ecological settings” (p. 673). In essence, learning occurs through interaction between

learners and the learning community in a manner that is not necessarily linear, top-down or passive. Thus, learners are both products and producers (Howard & Conway, 1986; Myran & Sutherland, 2019) and learning occurs in a manner where new knowledge is built upon existing knowledge in a scaffolding pattern (Myran & Sutherland, 2019). These definitions of learning and learners differ vastly from how they were defined during the industrial era, and even during the technological era.

Research supports the claim that learning and leadership have a direct correlation in that leadership makes a difference in student learning (e.g. Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Manna, 2015; McNulty, 2003; Orphanos & Orr, 2014; & Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). This claim can be traced back to the relationship between scientific management and learning. Scientific management took on the task of overseeing the “production” and delivery of knowledge (Callahan, 1964; Myran & Sutherland, 2019; Tyack, 1974, Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Myran and Sutherland (2019) reinforce this correlation, mirroring contemporary research (e.g., Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Murphy, 2013; Robinson et. al, 2008) in stating how the influence of scientific management on administration and leadership relied on the assumption of a direct linear path to its effect on learning. Thus indicating, that the assumed result of being properly managed would be attaining “desired learning outcomes” (Myran & Sutherland, 2019, p. 660). However, this relationship between leadership and learning is in direct contrast to the current trend of bi-directional and reciprocal interaction between students and educators that support and scaffold learning.

There are notable discrepancies in the linear path of scientific management’s influence on learning. First, scientific management overlooks the idea that those who are managed have

neither voice nor opinion in terms of outcomes or thought process. This, in itself, would suggest a nonlinear path towards a final product, which in this instance is learning. Second, scientific management does not take into account the complexity of humans and their dynamics (Myran & Sutherland, 2019). In this way, scientific management misconstrues the idea that those who are managed are complacent vessels with limited capabilities and capacities, all while succumbing to those in power. Furthermore, it assumes those who are managed have limited skill sets and simplistic manners of executing tasks. As a result of these assumptions, the field of education, which continues to “place undue faith in scientific management” (Myran & Sutherland, 2019, p. 660) appears misaligned with the goals of learning, as the goals of present day learning include critical thinking and critiquing status quos. Furthermore, over time, research indicates that the goals of learning continue to shift as it is increasingly understood how learning is achieved. In this way, a more in depth look at how learning occurs is necessary in order to further interpret and analyze scientific management’s linear approach to learning and if it remains productive in terms of accomplishing today’s goals of learning.

The Science of Learning

Post-Cognitive Revolution Theories of Learning

Education systems exist in order for learning to take place. The science of learning explains that learners are active agents of “his or her own intellectual and personal growth” (Myran & Sutherland, 2019, p. 682). Learning is a natural human condition (Alexander, Schallert, & Reynolds, 2009). Learning has served as the foundation of the educational system since the onset of the establishment of schools. Learning, as a construct, is constant. However, as society and the needs within the constructs of society have changed and arguably evolved, there has been little change in how learning is approached, explored, valued and ultimately

managed. Though certain constituents within education remain the same, as in its function of providing the means to which individuals can learn, other aspects are in a constant state of change. In addition to this, assumptions to how learning takes place, post-cognitive revolution, can perhaps be identified as hindrances to effective and sustainable change within the organization of present-day schools.

The assumption that learning is the product of the “active and deliberate agency of the learner” (Myran & Sutherland, 2019, p. 671) is one of the key concepts that scholars such as Bruner, Piaget and Chomsky identified following the cognitive revolution in the 1950s (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Howard, 1985; Howard & Conway, 1986; Myran & Sutherland, 2019; Pintrich, Marx, & Boyle, 1993; Zimmerman, 1986). Myran and Sutherland (2019) identify post-cognitive revolution as providing alternative perceptions and definitions from some of the noted limitations of behaviorism from scholars such as Bruner, Piaget, & Chomsky. Furthermore, Myran and Sutherland (2019) identify social cognitive theory as a lens to support this idea which states that learners actively seek information for the purpose of further developing understanding. In addition to this, post-cognitive revolution evidence indicates learning takes place in complex and dynamic environments that serve as platforms in which knowledge is ultimately constructed (Myran & Sutherland, 2019). This differs vastly from the closed-systems of schooling that were in place pre-cognitive revolution era. In this aspect, knowledge does not necessarily develop in a linear manner that merely consists of input, as once perceived. Learning, in fact, occurs as a result of input, analysis, output and reflection. This is considered an active process that relies on the learner actively engaging in the process.

The cognitive revolution shed light on the idea that humans were intellectually capable of constructing their own knowledge. This debunked the idea that humans were merely vessels

with limited capabilities (Myran & Sutherland, 2019) as described in the early onset of scientific management. The post-cognitive revolution era serves as a time period where humans and how they learn are now being viewed as more than ‘raw materials’ who learn passively (Myran & Sutherland, 2019). Theorists such as Bandura and Friere recognized and supported learning as an active process where learners interact with their environments in order to help construct learning (Alexander et al., 2009; Bandura, 1978; Friere, 1973/1985; Myran & Sutherland, 2019). As such, learning begins to take on a more highly complex exchange and experience than previously understood. The idea that learners could acquire knowledge through active engagement opens the door to the concept in which learners require environments that facilitate learning, as opposed to environments that merely seek to produce learning (Myran & Sutherland, 2019). This understanding provokes a deeper critique of organizational norms that dominate schools as well as a further analysis and reflection into the effectiveness of these present-day learning environments.

Incongruencies Between Scientific Management and Learning

Scientific management emphasizes the importance of increasing productivity levels (Kemp, 2013). The organization of schooling prioritized production levels during the era of accountability, following *A Nation at Risk* where it was reported that America’s public school system was demonstrating declining standards and being out-competed internationally (Kamanetz, 2018). The publishing of *A Nation at Risk* called for education reform efforts to increase student performance. In this regard, the purpose of school during this accountability era subtly shifted from successfully preparing a workforce to successfully performing on an assessment. Because this reform effort continued to rely on “job performance,” scientific management continues to be the preferred system of management and is being used to move

student learning towards a ‘predictable, controllable and manageable’ performance of efficiency and excellence. Though “job performance” and learning were arguably interchangeable and intertwined during the accountability era, neo-managerialism continued to serve as the default theory of management within schools. This form of management has previously been identified as having contrasting goals to that of which it is tasked to lead.

Present-day learning environments continue to operate within the norms and traditions of scientific management. This is supported and can be seen in practices that were born from the accountability movement (Au, 2011; Myran & Sutherland, 2019; Ravitch, 2016). Students are viewed as empty vessels, and those in positions of power are tasked with ‘filling’ these vessels with information which is assessed through a standardized high-stake performance. Myran and Sutherland (2019) emphasize the continued historical approach educational leadership has on primarily focusing on the “efficient and uniform operation of schools” (Callahan, 1964; Tyack, 1974, Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p.). In this aspect, Taylor’s scientific management continues to lead learning organizations tasked as though the management of a machine naturally and automatically leads to the productivity of people (Kemp, 2013). Furthermore, this leads to the assumption that the productivity of people directly correlates to learning taking place.

School leaders continue to serve with an authoritative style of management that is being identified as neo-Taylorism or neo-managerialism (Myran & Sutherland, 2019). Neo-managerialism describes how school systems were tightly-managed organizations that focused primarily on the management of the process and product (Myran & Sutherland, 2019). Neo-managerialism plays a dominant role in how today’s schools are being managed, which in turn, has a direct impact on students and student learning. This direct impact begins to define the incongruencies between scientific management and learning. Myran & Sutherland (2019) shed

light on a belief shared by several in the field, that “leadership is second only to teaching in its importance to student learning” (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Wahlstrom, 2008, p.667). This is where it begins to be understood not only the direct impact leadership has on learning, but the overall difference that leadership truly makes in terms of students’ success (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Manna, 2015; Orphanos & Orr, 2014; Robinson et al., 2008; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003, Myran & Sutherland, 2019). Leithwood and Wahlstrom (2008) go as far as to suggest that school leadership has up to a 25% effect rate on learning.

Neo-managerialism is based on the assumption that efficient management is a natural path to student learning (Myran & Sutherland, 2019). Though neo-managerialism is, perhaps, an effective style of management within businesses that may thrive on the decreased value of humanity, this in fact does not produce the same positive outcomes in an organization that is built on the premise of increasing the value of humanity. Schooling is an organization designed to promote learning. Effective learning is proven to be active, rather than passive; bi-directional, rather than linear. In this regard, learning is highly dependent on the reciprocity between learners and educators. Myran and Sutherland (2019) also emphasized the fact that neo-managerialism was based on the premise of an extreme lack of faith in the worker, in this case teachers, to make educated decisions independent of management. The accountability era is noted for top-down managerial style leadership that undermined educators and student “voice” alike. Myran and Sutherland (2019) evidenced this by stating by that the ‘scripted curricula’ and ‘prescriptive efforts’ (Au, 2011; Myran & Sutherland, 2019; Ravitch, 2016) both disempowered teachers and “reduced opportunities for students to be co- constructors of knowledge (p. 685). In this aspect, neo-managerialism is incongruent with student learning.

Furthermore, Myran and Sutherland (2019) also identify that neo-managerialism reinforces the assumption of “intellectual superiority of the educational elite”. These are emphasized aspects of Taylorism and are critical in understanding that this mentality of school leadership not only permeated the American school system during this reform effort but continues to be present in today’s schools. Tyack and Cuban (1995) speak directly of the “policy elites” or those deemed in charge of developing and implementing policies. These typically were high powered white men (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) of privilege who often had direct connections with the media and those of high political status. This reiterates that there was a “disproportionate authority” in educational reform efforts (Tyack & Cuban, 1995) by those who were not necessarily directly involved in schools. These were people inside and outside of education that viewed and agreed upon scientific management as an appropriate form of organization and leadership within America’s public schools (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). The fact that the very people who deemed scientific management as appropriate to lead schools in a manner that did not support what was identified as effective learning, is highly incongruent and ultimately, what is arguably one of the most damaging of the incongruencies.

How students learn continues to be grappled with as the definition of learning continues to evolve. However, leadership continues to lead schools as though learners are byproducts who are required to perform efficiently through passive interactions. According to Myran and Sutherland (2019), Wright (2003) speaks directly to the fact of how leadership continues to be taken over by managerialism. This is due to the fact that norms and traditions deeply rooted in scientific management continue to permeate how schools are led, which ultimately affects student learning. If in fact ‘leadership matters,’ and leadership is second to teaching in regard to learning (Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Wahlstrom, 2008; Myran & Sutherland, 2019)

then the incongruencies between leadership and learning can no longer afford to be ignored. The patterns within literature support the idea that learning is indeed active, and continuing to lead schools as though learning takes place passively in a closed system, is a detriment to any efforts needed to be initiated and sustained in order for effective learning to occur (e.g. Biesta & Tedder, 2006; Brown & Campione, 1996; Deci, 2009; Deci & Ryan, 2002; Greeno, Collins, & Resnick, 1996; Zimmerman, 1986). Myran and Sutherland (2019) cite:

The theme of active agency, whether explicitly identified or inferred by the assumptions of direct action required of the individual implied in the various theories and constructs, was evident. We found that learning entails the direct and active involvement of the individual (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Volet & Vauras, 2013), which includes factors such as listening (American Psychological Association, 2015), manipulating materials (Holyoak & Morrison, 2005), organizing and processing of information (Holyoak & Morrison, 2005; National Research Council, 2000; Pintrich et al., 1993), the selection of learning and problem solving strategies (Holyoak & Morrison, 2005), self-monitoring of one's learning experiences (National Research Council, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2000), self-regulating one's efforts (Pintrich et al., 1993; Zimmerman, 1986), the learner's perceived locus of control (Rotter, 1966), and the synthesis and organization of new knowledge (Deci & Ryan, 2002).

This synthesizes and once again supports that idea that the bi-directional and reciprocal interaction between students and educators supports and scaffolds learning, and therefore pushes us to further understand the true relationship between leadership and learning.

The Under Identified Paradox

One of the most important areas for contemporary education research is to further understand and recognize the symbiotic relationship of leadership and learning (Halinger, 2011; Myran & Sutherland, 2019). In addition to this, it is important to have a critical understanding of what the purpose of learning is and what is needed from present-day leaders to support learning. The norms and traditions of scientific management continue to permeate present day school leadership. If in fact these norms and traditions no longer support effective learning, then it is first critical for leadership to recognize and acknowledge this in order to make effective change, and ultimately progress.

Though learning continues to evolve, learning itself is not necessarily the variable in need of reform. Human cognition in itself is not necessarily changing, but our understanding of these processes have deepened and therefore evolved. In addition to this, there are social norms and expectations that have also evolved as humanity has evolved. Today, humans, as learners and leaders, have a more highly complex understanding of what is needed within our society, and therefore must critique and establish the very organizations that are tasked with equipping humans with the necessary means to promote effective, positive and productive change efforts-our schools. Present day schools and reform efforts require leadership abilities that complement today's transformative learners. Furthermore, leadership needs to be able to recognize the paradox of leading beyond any norms and traditions that no longer support and enhance the active learning efforts needed by today's learners. In essence, leadership that remains rooted in scientific management is incongruent with the transformative leadership that is needed today. And this incongruence is the crux to a highly under identified paradox within our current education system.

The norms and traditions under which school leadership continues to operate, are not only contradictory to how students learn, but arguably serve as barriers for school reform efforts. Tyack and Tobin (1994) refer to these norms as the ‘grammar of schooling’ (Myran & Sutherland, 2019). These norms and traditions continue to influence and shape practices within school systems that may prove to be in need of change for the sake of improvement. Myran and Sutherland (2019) take this one step further in acknowledging that these norms and traditions go as far as breeding ‘assumptions, biases and misconceptions about learning’ (p. 678). In this aspect, norms and traditions serve as potential barriers to positive and effective school reform efforts. If this is the case, then leadership, in terms of being rooted in scientific management, is in fact a barrier to the very thing of which it is directly connected to, learning. In order to introduce and sustain worthwhile reform efforts within education, it is critical that this paradox is not only identified but understood in order to hopefully instill worthwhile and meaningful change.

What History Implies about Credible Knowledge Claimants and Social Justice

A Problem Defined

One identified area in need of worthwhile and meaningful change, not only within schools, but within society itself, is the area of social justice. Simply stated, social justice continues to be an area within education in need of positive reform. Brown (2004) supports this by citing evidence that continues to support the significant amount of our public school educational experiences that receive negative and inequitable treatment (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Scheurich & Laible, 1999; Valenzuela, 1999). These experiences are not limited to our public schools, but extend into present day society as seen, for example, during the dual pandemic of

COVID-19 and the racism that has permeated our news feed post-George Floyd. It is evident that social injustices within today's society remain a complex issue in need of societal reform.

The landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954 (Lac & Baxley, 2019) and political acts such as No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 and Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013) are a few identified examples of reform efforts tasked with improving social injustices within education. Despite these efforts, Brown (2004) cites numerous scholars (e.g. Cochran-Smith et al., 1999; Grogan, 2000; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1995; Shields & Oberg, 2000) who continue to “advocate a critique of educational systems in terms of access, power, and privilege based on race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, language, background, ability, and/or socioeconomic position” (p. 79). An unintended consequence of these federal mandates was the disempowerment of educators (Myran & Sutherland, 2019; Myran 2018). Teachers were no longer “trusted” to teach content in a manner that differed from what became the standardized method of delivering instruction. Teachers became closely monitored to ensure instruction was test-centered and driven. This, in turn, dictated what teachers should teach and how it should be taught (Stillman, 2011). In this instance, an unintended consequence of reform efforts tasked to improve social justice efforts was a negative impact on teachers as individuals, teaching as a collective profession, and ultimately learners themselves.

This fact became even more prevalent under *No Child Left Behind*, the education reform effort within President Bush's Administration in 2002, specifically in terms of teaching diverse populations of students (Stillman, 2011). Teachers often reported teaching at-risk students without sufficient resources or support to meet their needs (Gonzalez, Peters, Orange & Grigsby 2017). Teachers reported a rise of teacher resistance and the decrease in teacher's trust in

leadership and the education system as a whole. However, teachers were left feeling as though they were doing a disservice to many of their students, particularly those that were marginalized. This left teachers feeling disempowered to make or lead change efforts. In this way, all of these serve as examples of key residual effects and unintended consequences that connect learning to neo-managerialism and scientific management. In this aspect, it is evident that social justice continues to be an area in need of positive reform efforts, and yet these residual effects of unintended consequences left educators feeling powerless to enact meaningful and necessary change.

Education is an organizational system viewed as being the great equalizer. However, social injustices within education continue to be present and therefore have a negative impact on equity, particularly for marginalized students. Brown (2004) identifies students of color and low socioeconomic status (SES) as still being amongst the subgroup of students who receive less than adequate resources, opportunities and experiences as compared to their white-middle class counterparts. In addition to this inequity, these marginalized students also find themselves on the lower end of test scores, teacher expectations (Brown, 2004) and graduation rates, while being at the higher end of discipline referrals and drop-out rates (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). In a system designed to be a great equalizer, prevailing social justice issues appear to depict a different description of the public education system.

Social Justice- An Identified Reform Effort

The road to equity within America's public school system is long and arduous and can be daunting in terms of realizing just how much work there needs to be done. Reform efforts, in terms of equity, are needed in policies, practices and curriculum. In some cases, these very reform efforts will challenge the norms and traditions school infrastructures are currently built

upon. This is a solid example of how neo-managerialism is perhaps a problematic style of leadership to “tackle” equity reform efforts. In this particular instance, the leadership required is transformative leadership that is equipped and prepared to challenge any barriers that may present as prohibiting progress. If leadership is not designed to challenge the status quo, then the learning process it is directly connected with, will be equally ill-equipped to challenge status quos. If learning is interconnected with leadership, then it is imperative that leadership is equipped to lead by example.

For the purpose of this paper, an identifiable area in terms of working towards a more equitable infrastructure within present day society, is in focusing on teaching and learning through a social justice lens within school systems. Brown (2004) cites several scholars (Cochran-Smith et al., 1999; Grogan, 2000; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1995; Shields & Oberg, 2000) as being strong advocates noted for their “critique of educational systems in terms of access, power, and privilege based on race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, language, background, ability, and/or socioeconomic position” (p. 79). A counterargument to incorporating social justice education, specifically, is that it merely provides a foundation for educators to instill within students what is fair and unfair. On the contrary, incorporating teaching and learning with a social justice lens provides a platform for students to reflect on the justices, biases and inequities within specific organizational systems and society as a whole. In addition to this, it allows school leaders to reflect, critique and make any necessary adjustments to any norms and traditions that perhaps no longer support this way of learning. Leading with a social justice lens provides a platform for teachers and school leaders to engage students in transformative learning by utilizing critical thinking skills and reflective practices. This is in

congruence to the interactive learning process which has been identified as being highly beneficial to students as learners (Myran & Sutherland, 2019).

Research states the importance of students developing transformative learning experiences and skills in order to help them interact with social justice and equity issues (Brown, 2004; Shields, Larocque, & Oberg, 2002). In this way, it is critical for students to actively construct their own observations and conclusions which informs a deeper understanding of what is fair and unfair. Several identified events that have occurred during the dual pandemic of 2020 have raised a conscious awareness of the ongoing racial inequities that continue to permeate American society. If racial inequities are indeed present within everyday society, then it is imperative that schools are equipped to interact and counteract social justice issues to build a more socially just society. In order for this type of learning to occur, teachers and school leaders must be prepared to lead students through curricula and a system of learning that not only promotes equity but raises a conscious awareness to enact change of anything that does not support this mission. In this way, school leaders must rise above the definition of leadership as defined through scientific management, in order to lead students, teachers and reform efforts in a transformative manner. This means that today's schools require a different type of leader than was required during the onset of America's school system during the industrial era.

It is evident that societal needs have changed, and our understanding of learning has evolved. Knowing what we know about the direct impact leadership has on learning, it appears safe to conclude that today's schools require teaching, leading and learning that require a different style of leadership. The type of leadership needed is one that leads reform efforts that promotes proactive learning efforts. In addition to this, leaders who lead with a social justice lens are needed in order to reflect, critique and challenge whether or not the learning that takes

place within schools truly mirrors the learning necessary for students to be positive change agents for a more equitable society. Because this perhaps differs from present day norms and traditions within schools and school systems, it is critical that present day leaders are equipped to break through any barriers present day norms and traditions may present when working toward a more socially just education system.

Social Justice and School Leaders

One of the most essential roles of a school leader is to contribute to the improvement of our society through the education of the students within schools (Pounder, Reitzug, & Young, 2002). A specific way to contribute to this improvement is by ensuring students actively engage in education with a social justice lens. First, in order to accomplish this, schools need to value equity and equitable practices (Pounder et al., 2002). Second, school leaders need to lead with a social justice lens that prioritizes being actively practiced through pedagogy and curriculum. In addition to this, it is equally important to ensure this lens and this methodology of active learning are embedded within a school's culture (Furman, 2012). Pounder et al. (2002) supports school leaders being tasked with the role of leading effective schools that enhance social justice and a democratic community.

Social justice education is an education process with a goal that values and identifies equal rights for all individuals within a society (Pounder, et al., 2002). In this aspect, social justice education requires leaders and educators to deliver curriculum to learners through a social justice lens in order for students to reflect on and challenge, if necessary, information that indirectly or directly supports social injustices. This type of transformative learning should not only be encouraged but embraced as leaders and educators serve as the role of facilitators. Brown's (2004) reference of Shields, Larocque, and Oberg (2002) states:

Wise educational leaders will learn to create psychological spaces for genuine exploration of difference; they will initiate conversations where problems and challenges may be identified and discussed; and they will create a climate in which staff and students feel safe in clarifying their assumptions to deal with cultural dissonance. (p. 130).

It is exactly these types of conversations that are needed to take place. It is the role and responsibility of educational leaders to not only ensure that these conversations are taking place, but to create a safe space within their organizations in order for students, teachers and school leaders to learn from these conversations. Subsequently, it is also the role of school leaders to recognize, critique and make necessary adjustments to any norms and traditions that serve as barriers or that fail to support these conversations are readjusted or removed altogether from the organization to the best of their capabilities.

Unlike scientific management, schools that lead with a social justice focus require leaders and educators to facilitate and participate in the learning process, and not merely shape and/or cause the learning process. It is critical that school leaders lead difficult dialogue with respect and awareness that is critically reflective (Brown, 2004). As such, school leaders play a primary and crucial role in ensuring that learning through a social justice lens is an intentional and deliberate component to the curriculum within schools. Social justice is not an isolated course, but rather a lens in which to view all curricula, methodologies, policies and practices with an inclusive vision (Brown, 2004). In order for students to learn through a social justice lens, this will require school leaders to “foster successful, equitable, and socially responsible learning and accountability practices for all students” (Brown, 2004, p. 80). In this way, school leaders are no longer needed to simply manage a workforce, they are needed to challenge, inspire, and empower a workforce.

If the purpose of present day public schools is to prepare students to be successful in the workforce beyond their school years, then it can be argued that schools have the added responsibility of preparing students to productively and positively contribute to an inclusive and democratic society. In this aspect, reform efforts that emphasize learning through social justice lenses are critical. In addition to this, school leaders who operate within the norms and traditions of scientific management, are in direct contradiction of the leadership that is needed for positive sustainable change in areas such as social justice. Therefore, it is critical to recognize the extent of which school leadership truly continues to operate within the norms and traditions of scientific management. Furthermore, it is important to understand how, in fact, this affects learning. This understanding is critical in order to further determine what steps and barriers lay ahead for school leaders and educators as they once again embark on reform efforts, specifically regarding social justice. Leading schools with a social justice lens is critical and highly needed in present day schools in order to once again address the systemic inequities that continue to plague our education system. Now more than ever, it is essential that school leaders demonstrate a deep-seeded commitment to reflecting on and if necessary, restructuring the norms and traditions of America's public school system to better meet societal needs.

Tools for Exploring and Understanding this Paradox

As we enter a paradigm shift where it is further understood that learners are active participants, it is imperative that leaders serve as disruptors to the norms and traditions that have not fully addressed equity and social justice issues (Lac & Baxley 2019; Lac & Cumings Mansfield, 2017). Brown cites how critical theory is “grounded in the day to day lives of people, structure and cultures” (p. 78). Critical theory tends to explore the relationship between those deemed to be in the role of privilege and power and those deemed as being dehumanized or

oppressed (Brown, 2004; Hodges, 2014). Critical theory helps to bring further understanding of this practice of disruption in the fact that it “calls educators to activism” (Brown, 2004, p. 86). For the purpose of this paper, critical theory is used to further understand the role and responsibility school leaders have in recognizing and promoting social change (Brown, 2004).

School leaders are tasked with ensuring reform efforts are carried through to fruition. In this way, school leaders continue to serve in a role of power, much like the role of the authoritative school leader within scientific management. However, present day schools are encountering a time of reform efforts that promote equity and efforts that are socially just. In this way authoritative leadership is no longer what is needed for today’s active learners. Transformative leadership is needed to encourage reflective and active learning and thinking from learners. This is how new knowledge is not only generated but applied in a way that is critical and reflective of creative and innovative thought processes. These thought processes are needed in order to present innovative and creative solutions to complex problems, such as more equitable processes. Learners are no longer viewed as oppressed vessels waiting for knowledge to be poured into them. On the contrary, today’s learners are needed to engage in transformative learning practices that are designed to shape learning and promote growth. In this way, today’s learners require a different style of management.

Contemporary researchers (e.g. Argyris, 1990; Banks, 1994; Smith, 1994) have recognized that learners, including educators, need to take responsibility for their own learning, as well as be reflective of their beliefs and values (Brown, 2004). Critical theory helps to understand not only the need to bring action to a cause but helps to further understand the need to challenge the very power structures that cause contentious barriers in the area of reform. Critical theory sheds light on the fact that in order for change to take place, it must first be analyzed to

determine the source(s) responsible for creating a barrier for change. Once the source is identified, it is critical to determine if the barriers are acceptable or justifiable (Brown, 2004) in order to determine how to effectively interact or counteract change. In this regard, using critical theory as a framework helps to further understand if in fact the norms and traditions of scientific management serve as a barrier for school leaders to enact educational reform efforts, specifically in the area of social justice.

Critical race theory is an additional framework of which to analyze and challenge how the paradox of operating within the norms and traditions have impacted the education system, specifically in terms of race and racism. Critical race theory helps to analyze the overall curriculum, assessments and instruction within schools (Nash, 2013). In this aspect, critical race theory is a useful framework to further understand the norms and traditions in which schools continue to operate, specifically in terms of race. This is critical in terms of equity and social justice as Lac and Baxley (2018) report evidence of how race and racism infiltrate almost every aspect of the K-12 education including, but not limited to the funding, disproportionate discipline of Black children and the continued use of Euro-centric materials and curriculum (Kozol, 2012; Loewen, 2008; Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

Although the goal of equity within education is the collective responsibility of all educators, it begins with a facilitated awareness within leadership (Lac & Baxley, 2018). Race and racism are embedded in the policies, practices and structures that guide many of the daily practices within schools and yet, research documents the disconnect between communities of color and their schools and school leaders (Parker & Villalando, 2007). In this way CRT serves as a framework to help understand and narrate race and racism. Nash (2013) emphasizes how CRT views most curriculum adoption as Euro-centric and disrupts the idea that students of color

learn best by generic set of skills. In addition to this Nash (2013) suggests through CRT that some assessments used for intelligence testing are designed to prove the inferiority of students of color. In this regard, CRT is a useful framework in which to further look into any disparities that might be present when discussing school improvement efforts.

Similar to critical theory (CT), critical race theory (CRT) is an active movement that allows scholars, educators, and activists to collectively combat the subtleties and overtness of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). This framework helps to analyze the inequities to not only recognize and learn from them, but to utilize this knowledge to transform and enact change (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). This framework is a critical tool in terms of understanding the paradox of leading through norms and traditions, with the goal of challenging these traditions. Dixon (2018), along with Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) made the argument that many of the practices and policies in our society contributed to the racial inequities identified within the education system. Therefore, CRT is a tool that is helpful in bringing to light these inequities, deeply rooted within the norms and traditions of the education system, in order to bring about change (Dixon, 2018). Together, critical theory and critical race theory are highly useful tools to further understand how the paradox of leading within the norms and traditions rooted in scientific management impacts school reform efforts regarding social justice.

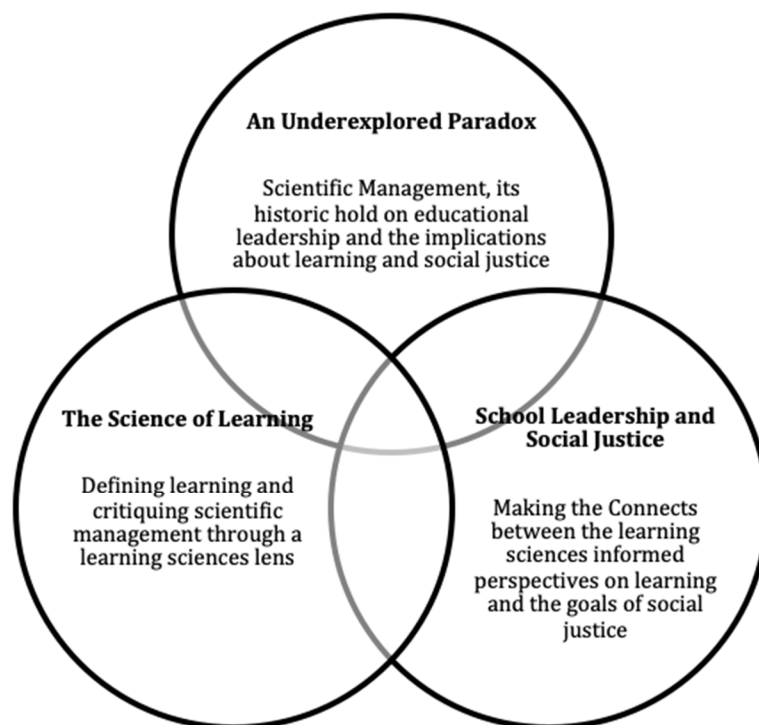
Pulling the Threads Together

Woven together, the review of the literature has highlighted that the normative, neo-managerial influenced organizational structures of schools are antithetical to the goals of both learning and social justice (see Figure 2). The review also emphasizes that without a means of exploring the incongruence between the historically rooted norms and our growing understanding about the nature of learning and the increasing push for more equitable and

socially just schools, deep change and improvement is unlikely and that these complex dynamics remain theoretically abstracted, inaccessible and unpracticed. As emphasized at the beginning of this chapter, there is rich literature on these related topics, however we know little about how educators navigate these paradoxes, especially as they overlap. The purpose of this dissertation is to further understand if and how exactly educators navigate these paradoxes, in order to add to the literature that connects these related topics. In understanding how educators grapple with these lived experiences, perhaps it is a movement in the direction of building a more equitable and socially just public education system reflective of today's societal needs.

Figure 2

An Underexplored Paradox, The Science of Learning and School Leadership and Social Justice



CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

As discussed in chapter 1, the purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of teachers and school leaders in how they navigate the competing values of neo-managerial influenced school improvement efforts and social-justice and equity based outlooks. The study will seek to answer the following questions:

What are the lived experiences of educators in how they navigate the competing values in the theoretical paradox in the context of school improvement?

- a. How do educators describe the structures and practices of school improvement?
- b. How do educators define or describe learning?
- c. How do educators define or describe social justice?
- d. Do educators experience this paradox through their shared stories?
- e. If so, what is the impact of that recognition?
- f. How do educators cope with the implicit or explicit recognition of this paradox?

Rationale for Using Qualitative Research

Given the nature of the identified gap in research, the identified problem and the generated research questions, a qualitative phenomenological research design is determined to be the most appropriate method of research. The phenomenological research approach is primarily concerned with further understanding social and psychological phenomena from the perspective of the people involved in said phenomena (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985). Hence, this approach is being chosen in order to provide an in-depth, first-hand understanding of the phenomena being studied. This design will help to look at the phenomena in a real-life context (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016), as well as serving to discover the essential meaning and essence of actual human experience being studied (Douglas & Moustakas, 1985). This approach allows me to closely examine the lived experiences of people (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) who interact with the theorized paradox identified within chapter two.

Phenomenology is concerned with the “analytical and descriptive experience of phenomena by individuals in their everyday world” (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015, p. 251); what some have referred to as the “lifeworld” of the research participants (Creswell, 2013; Husserl, 1956), This involves first-hand experiences and descriptions of those who are directly engaged in the phenomenon that is under investigation. Phenomenologists are concerned with capturing the essence of the experiences of the research participants, not measuring or explaining behavior, but allowing the participants to define for themselves the nature of their experience within the phenomenon (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). In this way, a qualitative, as opposed to quantitative approach is felt to yield the best responses to the research questions as thought possible.

This study is designed to explore a theorized paradox rooted in the lived experiences of teachers and school leaders. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) discuss the work of a qualitative researcher as being inductive. In the case of this study, I am attempting to provide rich detailed descriptions of the phenomena, while also utilizing the unique perspective of not necessarily being a fully detached observer. In this way, I will use the lens of personal perspective combined with the voice and experiences of individuals in search of patterns within the phenomena that can be used to help in filling the gaps within the identified literature. This is known as phenomenological reduction, which will allow me to analyze the data in order to highlight key findings. The goal of this study is to use the rich and detailed description paired with the phenomenological reduction to reveal the essence of the proposed research questions (Patton, 2002).

With that being said an identified limitation with this study is acknowledging that one's truth is not necessarily a universal truth. Therefore, the goal within this research is not necessarily to report experiences as truth, but merely as perspectives. The themes that come about through these perspectives and experiences are described as the interpretation of the phenomena. Thus, the focus of this research will rely on the interrelationships between the participants' context in which they reside and their actual lived experiences. In this way, the goal of the research is the interpretation of the phenomena (Merriam, 2007).

Role of the Researcher

As I learn more about the lived experiences of the participants, the goal is for purposeful conversations to identify themes and patterns to further understand the phenomena being explored. In addition to this, as participants respond to questions designed to uncover values, concerns, and needs (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992), this may lead to the formation of additional

questions that will add to the phenomena in unintended ways. Phenomenological research is not rigid; hence, this method is chosen in order to lead the researcher to verify the data through a creative interpretation. This, in itself, mirrors the active role a learner ultimately needs to take to attain and build upon knowledge, similar to what is described as effective learning in chapter 2. In this way, the method of research itself supports the very premise of the importance of active learning. The role of the researcher as a phenomenologist is to identify that learning from first-hand experiences as a valid way of interpreting the world (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015).

In phenomenology, the researcher themselves is an important part of the research process (Hays & Singh, 2012). I have the unique experience of being a former division administrator who was specifically asked to serve on a newly formed equity committee. This committee has been tasked as a result of a state mandate in which all public schools within the state of Virginia are to have an established equity committee. The role of this committee is to evaluate and ensure equitable practices are being effectively established, implemented, and critiqued throughout the infrastructures of the public school system it serves. Though it is unclear of the specifics of how the state will evaluate the effectiveness of the work produced by this committee, it is understood that each school system will undergo a state-led Equity Audit in the near future.

Since the establishment of the committee, I have resigned from my position as an administrator and currently serve on the committee as a parent volunteer. In this aspect, I continue to be immersed in the phenomena, but in a role that allows me to have a less biased interpretation of the phenomena. My direct role as a member of the committee can possibly be viewed as a limitation to the study due to potential biases. However, I also have the unique ability to uncover phenomena in an atmosphere where trust and relationships have been previously built. This method, known as hermeneutic phenomenology, has the potential to view

the role of the researcher as being better suited to interpret and develop an understanding of the identified phenomena (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015). Thus, my role as a researcher has the potential to invoke purposeful conversations with the participants as a previous relationship has already been established (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In this way, the potential for the participants to engage insightful and honest dialogue may lead to the interpretation of the phenomena to strongly be considered as valid, therefore adding to the gaps in literature in a meaningful and powerful way.

Selection and Recruitment of Participants

The study participants of this phenomenological case study are members of a newly formed Equity Committee within a mid-sized school district. The school district is located in a rural county within the western area of Virginia and serves approximately 11,495 students. Within this district, 20% (2,310) of these students are identified as students of color, and 80% of the district's students are recognized and identified as white. This school district has 4 high schools, 4 middle schools, 15 elementary schools and 1 alternative education school for high school aged students. The school district employs 24 building principals, 32 assistant principals and 22 Central Office personnel in various leadership roles (e.g. directors, supervisors, chief officers). All of these school leaders work under the guidance of 1 district superintendent and 2 assistant superintendents. The school district is currently divided into 4 regions within the county.

In October, 2019, the district superintendent tasked the assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction to establish and head up the division-wide Equity Committee in order to, according to the superintendent, “move toward a place when demographics are not predictors of success.” The committee is tasked with examining equity issues, including issues identified in the realm of social justice issues within the district's infrastructures and practices. The Equity

Committee is currently composed of the following eleven (11) district personnel: five (5) central office personnel, two (2) building administrators, two (2) classroom teachers, one (1) school counselor, one (1) parent volunteer and (1) community liaison. All members have either joined voluntarily or have been recruited to join and jointly represent elementary, middle and secondary school levels. All committee members have agreed to serve upon the committee due to their personal vested interests in the mission and vision of equitable practices within the district.

This school district has been chosen for this study due to the fact that it has recently undergone a 5-year school improvement initiative and is currently undergoing change efforts regarding virtual learning due to COVID-19 and CDC parameters. Hence, the district and participants themselves experienced reform efforts both pre and post the dual pandemic. This is of importance as the lived experiences will reflect reform efforts before, during and after the George Floyd era as well as before and after the parameters set into motion as a result of the global pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus. The school district has also been chosen due to the fact there is currently a heightened awareness of equity and social justice issues due to several current events. This awareness is currently raising questions and concerns as to how the school system plans to examine, evaluate and address the implications of these issues on current policies, curriculum and pedagogy.

The selected participants are a purposeful sampling (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) of the committee's members. The phenomena being studied is highly complex in that it deals with human experiences, reflections, insights and perspectives. The participants have been chosen due to the fact that they have each expressed a personal vested interest in the phenomena being studied. It should be noted that this purposeful sampling can be viewed as a limitation within the study, as all participants have a similar vested interest. However, the participants all have

varying levels of experience, backgrounds and years of service within the selected district. In this way, the lived experiences of each of the participants will hopefully show similarities and differences. The purpose of this sampling is to identify themes and patterns within these similarities and differences, and therefore the common vested interest in equitable practices with a social justice lens does not appear at the onset of this study to be a limitation.

Ensuring Participant Confidentiality

Pseudonyms will be used for all participants and the school system within the study. Any identifiable information that is retrieved from interviews, journal entries and memos will be replaced with unidentifiable information. All transcripts, interviews, journal response, recordings and memos will be stored on a personal computer. The personal computer is password protected and only accessible to the researcher.

Data Collection

Semi-Structured Interviews

It is determined that I will use semi-structured, yet in-depth interviews of a purposeful sampling of education leaders and teachers who serve on a division-wide committee dedicated to addressing equity issues. These interviews will serve as the primary source of data collection for this study. Interviews will utilize standard questions (Appendix B) to initiate data collection but will be semi-structured in order to have the flexibility to ask participants clarifying and follow-up questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Face to face interviews have the ability to establish a stronger rapport between participants and the researcher (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Due to extenuating circumstances of parameters set forth by COVID-19, virtual interviews will primarily be conducted and recorded using Zoom. Interview questions will be planned in

advance and will be conducted in a similar manner for all participants as recommended by Leedy and Ormrod (2016).

Interview questions will include questions specifically designed, but not limited to “unpacking” the phenomena. Questions are designed for participants to share lived experiences. Participants will be encouraged to support their responses with personal examples and stories in order for the researcher to look for themes and patterns within and amongst the lived experiences. The questions that are being asked are in direct correlation to the identified research questions within this study. I will ask follow-up questions in order to gain clarity or to require participants to elaborate on their responses. All interviews will be summarized so that each participant’s experiences can be understood with reference to one another in addition to the overall context of the study. This will serve as a validity check as the researcher develops and moves between themes identified throughout the interviews.

Journal Reflection Entry

In addition to semi-structured interview questions, this study will use journal entries for the purpose of data collection. The combination of interviews and journal entries, specifically in academic work, is used to acquire an expanded understanding of the complex relationship between lived experiences and personal understanding (Spowart & Nairn, 2013). Participants will each be asked to respond to 6 open-ended questions using a Google Questionnaire format (see Appendix C). These questions are again, in direct correlation to the identified research questions with this study. These questions have been determined to best be answered using an open-ended style of journal writing in that they specifically ask participants to offer personal definitions of key terminology within this study. The choice to have participants respond in writing to these definitions, as opposed to orally, is for participants to have an increased amount

of time to thoroughly and thoughtfully respond to each definition. These definitions are key to this study, and it is the hope of the researcher that each participant takes as much time as needed to clearly, accurately and thoughtfully respond to these definitions. The purpose of these journal reflections is to elicit further understanding and meaning for the participants and the researcher (Spowart & Nairn, 2013).

Participants will each be sent a link to the Google form immediately preceding their interview. This sequence of questioning is to hopefully increase the interconnectedness between the participants' oral response with their written response. Participants will be given two (2) days to return the journal entry responses to the researcher. This time period is being selected to allow participants time to generate thoughtful responses, but not too much time that the goal of interconnectedness is lost. Journal entries will be directly submitted to the researcher 48 hours following the participants interview.

Field Note and Memoing

Strauss and Corbin (1990) identify memoing as a critical tool that can be utilized throughout the data collecting process. Field notes capture the researcher's insights of what they experience during data collection (Hays & Singh, 2012). Memos are also a key element to data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Thus, memoing will be conducted after each interview and journal entry submission by the researcher in order to further analyze and interpret observations and responses. Memoing is intended to help fill in identified gaps of data collection and holes within the researcher's thought process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Memoing also assists in managing biases, as well as adds to the rigor of the study (Hays & Singh, 2012). Memos will be dated and referenced, as well as coded for data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). These dates will reflect no more than 24 hours after the interview is conducted or the journal entry is

received. This will ensure my interpretation and analysis is as accurate as possible and for the researcher to remain self-aware of any thought or biases that may result in interfering with the study in hopes of assuring the validity of the study's results.

Phenomenological Data Analysis

According to Leedy and Ormron (2016), data analysis relies heavily on inductive reasoning in qualitative research. Due to the fact that this is a phenomenological study, a phenomenological data analysis will be utilized in order to fully study and analyze the phenomena as a whole (Hycner, 1999). Hycner defines this data analysis using the term explication (1999). Hycner's five steps of explication of data include:

1. Phenomenological reduction
2. Delineating units of meaning
3. Clustering of units of meaning to form themes
4. Summarizing each interview
5. Composite summary

Hycner's identified five steps will be utilized to guide the data analysis process, in regard to understanding the phenomena as a whole (1999). Phenomenological reduction allows the researcher to view the phenomena however it may present itself (Hycner, 1999). This will allow me to see the phenomena beyond the typical linear cause and effect outcomes associated with data analysis, and more along the lines of whatever the phenomena presents in its own right (Hycner, 1999). Furthermore, delineating units of meaning amongst the phenomena presented will allow me to actively engage, expand and clarify any insights gained while avoiding subjectivity (Hycner, 1999). This 'bracketing' allows all points of view to be taken into

consideration as the voices of the subject matter are synthesized for the purpose of full consideration (Hycner, 1999; Lauer, 1958, p. 49).

I will cluster these units of meanings into themes. The purpose of these themes is to seek out the essence of the meaning in the context in which the phenomena is presented (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The data collected will be initially coded by themes as determined by the interpretation of the phenomena. In this aspect all interviews conducted will be summarized and coded in a way that the unique experiences of the interviewees is represented and simultaneously understood in reference to the other participants (Hycner, 1999). I will identify these themes to be used in the overall summary of the phenomena and code these themes accordingly. In this aspect, coding will be a critical and necessary component to data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Finally, it is important to note all interviews will be conducted and recorded using a video conferencing tool. This method of interviewing is primarily due to the ongoing restrictions of limited face to face interactions under COVID-19 parameters as dictated by the CDC. All recordings will be stored in iCloud which can only be accessed by the researcher's use of a password. All interviews will be downloaded, stored and organized using NVivo data analysis software. All data, including memos, will initially be analyzed by the researcher within 24 hours of data collection to ensure an authentic interpretation of the data. This will also provide a common analytic structure for all data collected.

Trustworthiness

As a researcher, one of my significant roles is to secure the trustworthiness of the data presented in order to demonstrate credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. First, the idea of credibility will be demonstrated through the overall means in which the

phenomena of the lived experience of the participants is, in essence, captured (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Secondly, the use of interviews and journals supports the overall development of the identified themes. These phenomena will provide readers with enough descriptions, quotes, and lived experiences necessary to assess the transferability of these findings to similar contextual settings (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). Finally, the idea of confirmability will be addressed by the inclusion of authentic quotes from the research participants presented in the findings. This will ensure the integrity of the research participants' voices and perspectives while managing any biases held by those in the position of data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Together, these measures of securing trustworthiness will ultimately lend itself to the overall dependability of the findings presented to the reader.

Bracketing: Challenges, Complexities and Limitations

It is important to note, that while transcendental phenomenology seeks to make observations from the point of view of a detached observer, or “setting aside” prior understandings or encapsulating one’s preconceptions, theoretical commitments and experiences (Le Vasseur, 2003), other traditions emphasized that attempting to eliminate or reduce researcher objectivity in pursuit of rigor is neither possible nor desirable (e.g. Eddles-Hirsch, 2015; Gregory, 2019). These scholars argue that phenomenological findings are co-created by both researchers and participants, rigor and trustworthiness are dependent on making their preconceptions and their contribution to the process clear (Lowes & Prowse, 2001). Others have suggested that bracketing can obscure preconceptions held about a population or a topic (Oakley, 2010), thus potentially amplifying them in the analytic process. Thus, “bracketing one’s lived experiences—whether theoretical, experiential, or mediated through popular culture—cannot be quartered off for the purpose of studying a population” (Gregory, 2019, p. 8). While the notion of

the detached observer might seem an inviting means of assuring that researcher bias doesn't shape the nature, direction and findings of the research, social science investigations are too complex and detaching oneself entirely is simply not possible.

The researchers' bias shouldn't be "bracketed" or ignored, but explored and made transparent (Hammersley, 2000). In this way, an oversimplified notion of bracketing one's bias risks undermining the very thing it seeks to address, that is rigor and trustworthiness. In fact, some have argued that all cognition, including quantitative research activities, relies on one or more conceptual frameworks, which shapes how we interpret the world (Salsberry, 1998; Tufford & Newman, 2010). As such, acknowledging one's theoretical positions, power, privileges, life experiences and potential biases, that is interrogating one's role in the research in open and reflective ways prepares the researcher to address the seen and unseen obstacles as the study unfolds (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Gregory, 2019).

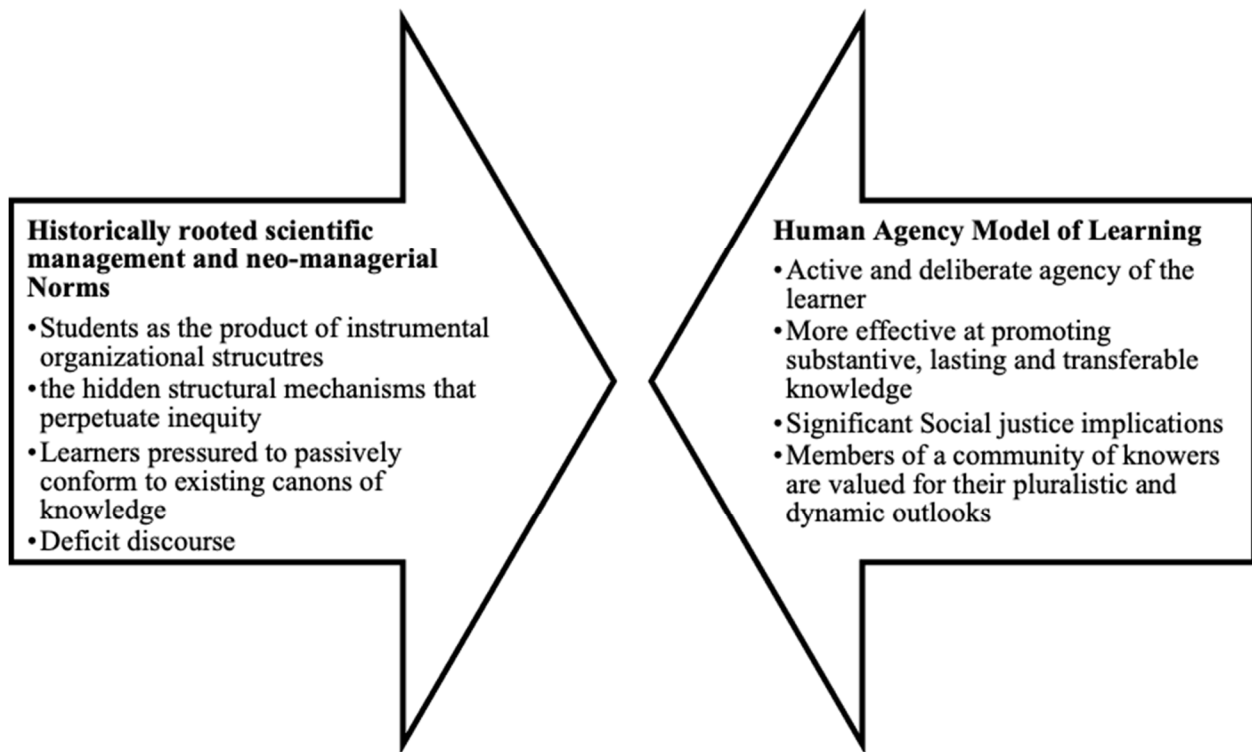
CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS & RESULTS

As stated in chapter one, reform and improvement efforts have a history of focusing primarily on improving the productivity and efficiency of school structures and its workforce, and even the “products” themselves. Though reform efforts have evolved since the onset of the industrial era into the cognitive era, the normative, neo-managerial climate which oversees these efforts has not. In this way, the neo-managerial climate serves as a barrier to our collective recognition of one potential source of the unruly resistance to deep systemic change and improvement, hence the incongruence between these normative structures and values and a human-agency based perspective on learning and social justice. Historical reform efforts have presented patterns of ineffective sustainable change efforts. Arguably, school systems can no longer afford to operate within these incongruencies, as sustainable change efforts are highly needed to successfully navigate the social justice inequities identified and perpetuated by current policies and practices. While there is rich literature on these related topics, the data analyzed in this chapter is primarily focused on further understanding how educators navigate this theorized paradox (Figure 3).

Figure 3

A Theorized Paradox Between Dominant Neo-Managerial Norms and a Human Agency Orientation



Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of teachers and school leaders in how they navigate the competing values of neo-managerial influenced school improvement efforts, a human agency outlook about learning, and social justice and equity based practice and outlooks. The following ten (10) interviews were conducted in an attempt to understand how educators navigate this theorized paradox in a present day rural Virginia public school system. The public school system chosen for this study is currently undergoing intentional efforts to build a more equitable and socially just school culture and environment for their students and school community. A result of this intentionality is a newly established Equity Committee. Eight out of the eleven members from the schools' equity committee voluntarily

participated in this study, in addition to the district's Assistant Superintendent of Leadership & Administration and Superintendent with the intent to help answer the following research questions:

What are the lived experiences of educators in how they navigate the competing values in the theoretical paradox in the context of school improvement?

- a. How do educators describe the structures and practices of school improvement?
- b. How do educators define or describe learning?
- c. How do educators define or describe social justice?
- d. Do educators experience this paradox through their shared stories?
- e. If so, what is the impact of that recognition?
- f. How do educators cope with the implicit or explicit recognition of this paradox?

All ten (10) research participants individually and actively participated in semi-structured interviews with the researcher. All interviews were conducted via Zoom due to the safety parameters deemed most appropriate by the CDC due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Each of these interviews featured a recording and transcription, which were permissible by the interviewer. All initial interviews were between the duration of 1- 1 ½ hours in length and were based on the same structured question format. Research participants were each asked follow-up questions depending on the individual stories they shared.

Research participants were also given the opportunity to answer six (6) follow-up questions via a google form that was sent out immediately following each in-person interview. Eight (8) of the ten (10) research participants actively participated in this journal entry style of follow-up questioning. Three (3) research participants were contacted by the researcher following the interview for clarifying questions. Two (2) research participants emailed the

researcher to voluntarily follow-up with information that was shared within the interview. It is with the highest regard that as a researcher, I have listened and best amplified the voices of each research participant to the best of my ability to accurately represent the qualitative data presented in this research study.

Analytic Process

Concurrent Analysis

Concurrent with the field notes I captured throughout data collection and analysis I initially categorized the data into twenty (20) codes (see Figure 4). This process was first captured by marginalia, according to preliminary identified themes. Though there was no clear logic structure at this point of data analysis, some key ideas were surfacing throughout several early interviews. Key ideas which appeared to be repetitive, were coded and used to ask specific follow-up questions in succeeding interviews. An example of this type of initial coding is when it was brought to my attention that the school district has been undergoing a new school improvement initiative in reading for students in grades kindergarten through 5th grade. This initiative is identified as the Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS). The LETRS initiative is used throughout this study to closely examine and attempt to understand how educators are able to navigate the structures and practices of a school improvement initiative in nearly all of the conducted interviews.

The LETRS initiative provided a baseline understanding of what an academic school improvement initiative within this district entails. Several identified traits of this academic initiative involved time, the collective efficacy of teachers and administrators and comprehensive training. Another important early finding was the fact that a neo-managerial climate continues to exist within the school system as a whole. Though there is evidence of transformative leadership

styles within building level leaders and central office leaders, this is inconsistent amongst middle management and amongst individual schools. The neo-managerial climate is evident in the top-down style of leadership that permeates and influences much of the decision making regarding the initiation and implementation of reform efforts.

For the purpose of this study, the LETRS initiative serves as a reform effort for research participants to share stories and experiences. Codes emerged from this academic reform effort, which proved helpful in beginning to understand how educators navigated equity and social justice reform efforts within a neo-managerial climate. The coded data was categorized into themes in order to help understand and further analyze how the research participants experienced and navigated the reform efforts concerned with equity and social justice issues.

Early Open Coding

Using marginalia, I loosely captured emergent themes and an organizational structure of the collected data as I conducted the interviews. Next, I uploaded all transcripts using NVivo 12 software, and building from these early coding and coding structures, I used intuitive open coding to begin to understand how the LETRS initiative was implemented, primarily in the neo-managerial climate. Here I found that the difference between distributive leadership and transformational leadership and managerial leadership was noted by several research participants. Of particular interest, is what was noted by a participant in terms of the culture of leadership and its importance.

I do think the building level leadership is very influential and of course the division leadership could be guiding that. (Participant 4)

Also, of interest, was the shared concerns and worries of leadership and the theme of problematic leadership. Participants shared their concerns through their stories. Among these identified themes was collective capacity and efficacy.

We know that building collective efficacy among our teachers is so important, but we have no collective efficacy among our leaders. (Participant 3)

You've got all these different elementary principals. Absolutely, no one is on the same page on everything... [they're] just not. (Participant 7)

The definition of learning was early coded amongst leaders and teachers. An early theme that was emerging was educators as learners. The description and definition of learning was the collective agreement amongst most researcher subjects.

The ultimate goal for learning is for students to become well rounded citizens who are able to think critically, problem solve, communicate, and collaborate through engagement in hands-on, inquiry based learning activities that are relevant to their lives. (Journal Entry #1)

K-12 students should learn about themselves and each other in relation to the world. They should learn about what it means to be human, how humans interact with each other (in just and unjust ways), and how humans interact with the earth (in sustaining and unsustaining ways). (Journal #6)

To help learners grow emotionally, socially, and academically in a way that gives them the skills they need to be informed, compassionate, and skilled global citizens. (Journal Entry # 8)

Critical awareness and cultural awareness stemmed from these definitions of learning. This led, early on, to the conversations and early coding of professional development and personal existence amongst educators.

The norms and traditions most commonly rooted in the accountability system, were easily identified within professional development and reform efforts. This was evident in the continued focus on the standardization of academic progress. Codes of barriers of norms and traditions and therefore tensions emerged from this standardization. Identified tensions centered around trust and fear. Intuitive open coding led to themes of trust and conversations amongst educators.

They actually built an accountability system that made people very afraid to take up difficult topics. (Participant 4)

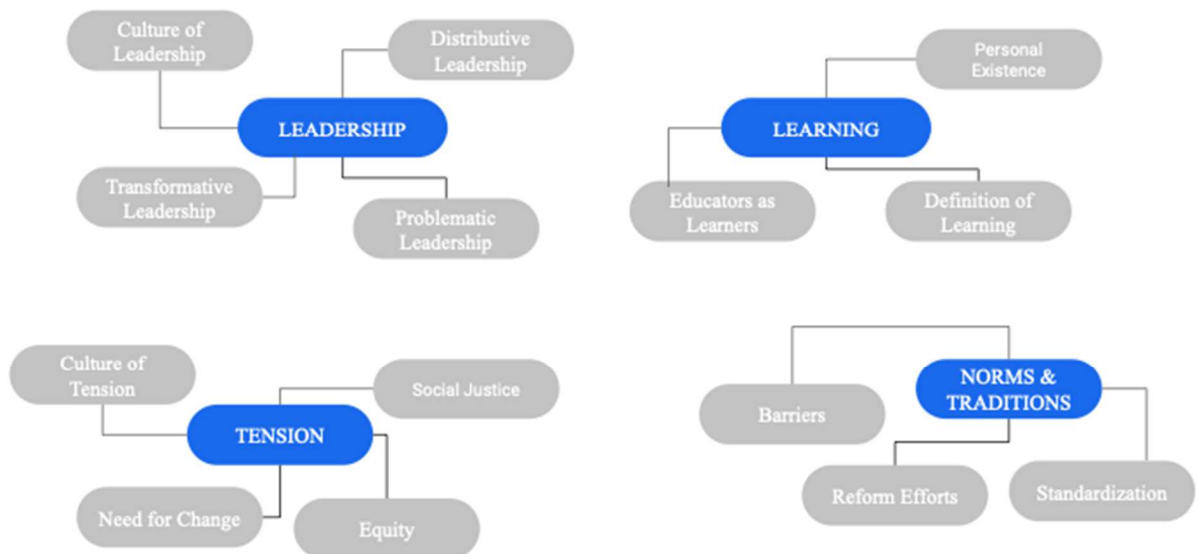
And what does that do for the appreciation of learning within our community, learning within ourselves, learning about our complex world, learning that I am not to be measured by anyone. I mean, it just completely defied my logic.

(Participant 4).

Though 20 codes were initially identified at this onset stage of analysis, these codes were quickly placed into the specific themes by using the research questions as a lens and a guide in which to further categorize and develop connections amongst the data.

Figure 4*Open Coding***Axial Coding-Level One**

Building from the open coding discussed about, axial coding was used to help relate codes to one another and create connections. Axial coding is a foundational building block of connecting codes amongst the phenomena within themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). This first level of coding helped bring greater structure by identifying initial connections amongst data, which further helped to refine the data. The emerging themes were identified as leadership, learning, norms & traditions and tensions. These served as a clarifying structure to the otherwise unrelated codes. Codes within these themes were identified and categorized (Figure 5). The connections within each of the identified themes provided the beginning stages of identifying and understanding the relationships between the normative structures and the incongruences present within the neo-managerial leadership climate. It was evident during this early stage of coding that there were signs of tension present.

Figure 5*Axial Coding- Level One****Leadership in Axial Coding-Level One***

Transformative and distributive leadership styles were described by several research participants as a key factor necessary for the successful implementation of the LETRS initiative. It was noted that the building level middle management cannot be expected to do the training alone.

I just think that we asked our principals to do a lot. More than what one person could possibly be expected to do. (Participant 1)

It was determined that distributed leadership was the manner of leadership that best describes the internal level of leadership at the central office level. As a result of piloting the literacy

initiative, it was decided amongst central office leadership that each elementary school would develop their own distribution model of leadership amongst teachers to be supervised by a team of central office personnel. It was determined that the team of central office personnel was to work with building principals in overseeing the implementation of the initiative. In this aspect a neo-managerial climate of school leaders permeated the initiative. However, several principals were concerned that there was little to no mention of how equity issues were being addressed within the implementation of this academic initiative.

SOLS and making sure that we're getting kids to the right reading levels and helping kids with their math skills and number sense and all of these buzzwords about education. But equity is not there enough. (Participant 7)

Equally important to note was that all of the research participants noted that a transformational style of leadership as opposed to the neo-managerial style of leadership was needed to lead present day schools.

Schools need innovative leaders who are not afraid of conflict and do not shy away from controversial ideas because they know that conflict can be approached as an opportunity for transformation into something productive within the community. (Journal Entry #5)

Transformational so they can lead teams to identify needed change, create a vision to guide the change and implementation of the change. (Journal Entry #2)

In addition to transformational leadership being identified as a key factor to successful implementation, was also the fact that leadership traits which were identified repetitively, were innovative, courageous and risk-takers.

Schools need innovative and intellectual leaders who can work within existing systems while also pushing back on those systems. By intellectual, I mean leaders who are

appreciative of complexity and aware of paradox. Schools need innovative leaders who are not afraid of conflict and do not shy away from controversial ideas because they know that conflict can be approached as an opportunity for transformation into something productive within the community. School leaders need a complex and ever-developing understanding of and commitment to issues of equity, inclusion. (Journal Entry #6)

Equally worth mentioning, was the fact that many research participants felt the need to respond to the leadership trait of being culturally responsive.

In 2021, we need leaders who are culturally responsive. These leaders are able to work alongside their teachers and staff to create school climates and cultures that are inclusive of everyone, not only celebrating diversity but seeing it as a strength. These leaders are able to build inclusive communities within their schools as well as with the parents of their students, recognizing that as our demographics shift, we must shift our practices to ensure they are inclusive of all cultures and traditions. This requires critical self-awareness and a willingness to engage in hard conversations that will be uncomfortable but are necessary. (Journal Entry #1)

This data revealed leadership traits not necessarily characteristic, and perhaps even incongruent with neo-managerial leadership. The data also reveals the importance of the collective efficacy of a school community. This is highly incongruent to the neo-managerial linear style of leadership that was once relied on to implement reform efforts.

Learning in Axial Coding-Level One

The connection and importance of learning was amongst educators and learners alike. First off, the research participants were asked to describe learning. They were each asked it at

opportune times as it came up in their interviews and then later defined it through their journal writing. The research participants' definition of learning was described in the first level of open coding. It was apparent that in terms of the professional development regarding the LETRS initiative, this was a reform effort for the sake of an academic accountability effort.

We're getting all LETRS trained to improve our reading instruction. (Participant #6)

We're going through LETRS training so that we can do the science of reading beta brain based changes in teaching reading. (Participant #9)

The type of leadership as defined by learning was noted in their journal entries.

Schools and organizations need to recognize the need to improve practice and make profound changes in order to best serve students. (Journal Entry #2)

Even more clear alignment perhaps if I'd say - in alignment with ideal purposes of school, educational leaders must foster (in themselves and others) inquiry, curiosity, and an open-mindedness toward interpreting ourselves and the world (people, culture, literature, stories, systems, science, statistics, history, geography, etc.). This approach includes critical self, systemic, and historic analysis of what works in schools for whom and how to revise practices, policies and beliefs to better generate equitable opportunities and outcomes for each and all. (Journal Entry #6)

A concern about the connection between leadership and learning is noted in this disconnect.

...read this book and do this LETRS training, but at the end of the day, we're not actually stepping back to have meaningful conversations about what does it mean to be a leader right now? (Participant 3)

Though learning was an important part of this initiative for students, the reflection of learning amongst educators did not appear to be as valued as was the learning of students. This became of importance when navigating the norms and traditions of educators as learners.

Norms & Traditions in Axial Coding-Level One

The accountability system has been built upon norms and traditions. These norms and traditions have made up the context of school improvement. One research participant spoke directly to this point.

And what does that do for the appreciation of learning within our community, learning within ourselves, learning about our complex world, learning that I am not to be measured by anyone. I mean, it just completely defied my logic. (Participant 4)

They actually built an accountability system that made people very afraid to take up difficult topics. (Participant 4)

By not emphasizing the importance and value of critical and reflective learning of the educators themselves, this reform initiative does not show value to the educator as a learner. This, in itself, is congruent to a managerial style of leadership but highly incongruent to the very style of transformational leadership that is stated as being needed. The data revealed this recognition was being made more from middle management than from central office leadership. In this way, the incongruence presented in this data was a potential identified barrier. Additional codes of barriers within the theme of norms and tradition are advocacy, cultural diversity, lack of conversations, fear, turnover, mindsets and community support.

Reform efforts are often classified as innovative versus traditional efforts. A research participant noted:

We want them [school leaders] to be more innovative in what they're doing and not just do kind of your traditional what we've always done. (Participant 1)

It was once again described as courageous leadership, in the form of central office leadership, as needing to be innovative to break through the norms and traditions.

He [superintendent] put us in a direction that he wanted us to go, and he put himself on the line for that, and he had to spend some capital in making it happen. (Participant 1)

The school system in this study has shown clear signs of implementing innovative reform efforts in which characteristics of transformational leadership is evident. In this aspect, it appears that educators within this system are continually straddling innovative and traditional approaches to reform efforts. In this aspect, an additional theme that presents itself from this finding is how straddling two opposing approaches can possibly lead to tension.

Tension in Axial Coding- Level One

As far as norms and traditions are concerned, the tension seems to begin to be defined by the straddling of norms and traditions and innovation. In addition to this tension, is the participants' recognition of wanting to move in a direction that is at odds from the norms and traditions of the system. In this case, an identified tension is the opposing roles standardization plays from the diversity.

Attention to diversity in equity is always at odds with standardization. If what we want is for everyone to succeed on the exact same measures having studied the exact same curriculum, it's at odds with wanting to be equitable and provide different things for different students based on their needs. It's at odds with a diverse approach because we're all taking the same test and have to answer in the same way to do well. (Participant 4)

In this instance, the codes were initially noted as the need for change, cultural tension and equity. It was noted that the need for change was warranted by the leadership, the educators and the community alike. The need to change people doesn't come without the need to change practices.

The need for changes is so urgent we cannot wait for people to change their minds. We have to change our practices. (Participant 4)

Therefore, it became imperative to look more deeply into the data to further understand how educators were truly navigating the incongruences and tensions of implementing practices and policies that not only misaligned with pedagogy but did not align with transformative beliefs of leadership and learning as a whole.

Axial Coding-Level Two

Exploring Transformative Leadership in Axial Coding-Level Two

Once the data revealed the style of leadership needed to move innovative reform efforts, transformational leadership, it was further important to look closely at the key qualities needed within this leadership style. Trust and relationship building are two key qualities that all research participants noted of importance.

You need to practice what you preach. You have to live what you're saying. It's really got to be a part of your DNA (Participant 10).

It was acknowledged by most of the research participants that transformative leaders must first and foremost make relationships with teachers and students. In addition to this, it was noted that transformative leaders paid close attention to their communities and specifically the learners in their communities.

Transformative leaders can adapt to situations to best fit the needs of the learners in the community. (Journal Entry #8)

You know it is about relationships right that informs everything when it comes to mental behavioral health, you know, it's about community. We involve the community a lot and it's got to be about community. (Participant #9)

One research participant stated:

We don't need community support when it comes to LETRS. They don't know. They don't know what we've been teaching, they don't know how it's any different than what we've been doing... those things, the things that happened within the confines of an established structure, people don't, they're not concerned about.....It's when you start changing the structure that's what matters. When you change the structure that gets people's attention because it requires them to now move. (Participant 1)

This finding further identifies the incongruences between transformational leadership traits and a climate dictated by neo-managerialism.

Exploring Learning in Axial Coding-Level Two

Two fundamental codes essential to the theme of learning are educators as learners and the emerging code of cultural awareness. The coding began as educators continually self-identified as all-encompassing learners; people who needed to think of themselves as continuous learners (i.e. leaders and teachers). This finding is of importance as learning is no longer only relevant to the “products” of the system or the students. Learning is seen as a critical importance to all constituents of the school community as necessary for growth and productivity.

Educators openly self-identified as learners is of importance because it indicates a value, collective and individual. The idea of cultural awareness emerged within this recognizable value. Several research participants noted their desire to grow the cultural awareness within themselves and their surrounding learning communities. In this sense, cultural awareness was

identified as an area in need of improvement. This observation identifies a connection of leadership and learning with a diversity lens as a potential focus of school and self-improvement. One research participant emphasized what is needed as a result of this connection.

I think the critical piece underneath all of it is really trying to create a culture of a no blame culture, a critical self-examination culture, a desire to improve schools for every single student in every single demographic, knowing that greater equity. More inclusiveness and more diversity in the curriculum is good for everyone (Participant 4)

This intuitively speaks to the cultural awareness critical to the overall school improvement needed. Hence, leadership and learning, specifically with a diversity lens. in the context of school improvement, is critical.

Exploring Norms & Traditions in Axial Coding-Level Two

The data revealed navigating norms and traditions is, in fact, viewed as a concern in the way of competing values. It is common to see a pattern of reform efforts tasked to rewrite the historical narrative based upon the current trending pendulum swing in education.

...there's no one single check the box reform effort against critically examining and trying to expand a historical narrative. That's curricular work. That's relational work. That's self-reflective work. (Participant 4)

This reveals a connection between learning and navigating norms and traditions for the purpose of ultimately leading to successful reform.

So, do you ask, how do people support that change? How does that change happen? I think it happens at the personal [level]. I think it has to happen in personal, professional, authentic ways. I think it should begin with a team of volunteers who want to be part of that work. (Participant 4)

This begins to speak to the mindset needed to navigate any norms and traditions.

It is important to acknowledge and perhaps place value on mindsets. This is of importance to help determine how to best navigate the barriers that are present which can offset and prevent change from occurring. One example that the data revealed about shifting the mindsets, primarily of leaders and teachers, was to acknowledge the fact that in stating “all students”, all truly means all.

It's going to be changing some mindsets here, changing some there and just continuing to watch it grow and get those building level administrators in a place where they feel good to have those conversations, you know that that they can talk about.... “All students mean all.” It's not a great long powerful vision statement but all means all. (Participant 5)

One of the norms and traditions that the data identified as in need of improvement is having meaningful and honest conversations. Once mindsets shift, in order to begin to navigate the norms and traditions in a sustainable way is through conversations.

If we're not having those conversations right now, if we're not talking about it, how do we meet the needs of all of our students, and how can we have conversations in our classrooms, how can we celebrate the different ways that kids learn? (Participant 3)

The lack of conversations was identified as a barrier.

We don't talk about how we're serving students who come from other countries, and speak other languages, you know it's our division does not discuss...We don't discuss how to differentiate for kids that come to us not speaking English, and how to make those kids feel comfortable and safe, you know that's on us as school leaders. (Participant 3)

This particular quote speaks directly to the importance of successfully navigating the barriers set forth by norms and traditions in order for equitable learning opportunities to occur.

Exploring Tension in Axial Coding-Level Two

The data reveals that the lived experience of teachers and school leaders does not necessarily reflect that there is collective buy-in to the mindset that “all means all.” As a result, this identifies a source of tension. All, in some cases, lack representation of those who are marginalized or whose voices are not at the table. One research participant stated:

The need for changes is so urgent we cannot wait for people to change their minds. We have to change our practices. So of course, we always concluded that you have to try to change both. (Participant 4)

Trying to change practices, policies and mindsets at the same time is a lot for people to navigate. It is clear how this a source of tension and yet it appears necessary to navigate in order to bring about effective change.

One way to navigate this tension is through conversations. Several research participants revealed that leadership is responsible for allowing these conversations to take place. However, these conversations need to be more than just opened up to teachers. In order for conversations to be productive they need to be conducted in a way that allows vulnerability, honesty and openness. One research participant placed importance on the aspect of vulnerability.

If you're not doing that [being vulnerable] as a building leader and you're not allowing your teachers to feel comfortable having those conversations and you're not even saying to yourself, like you know, I realized when I was teaching, here's something I did... you know we've all made mistakes. We're not perfect but we have to at some point say, I recognize this now. And here's how I'm going to move forward. (Participant 3)

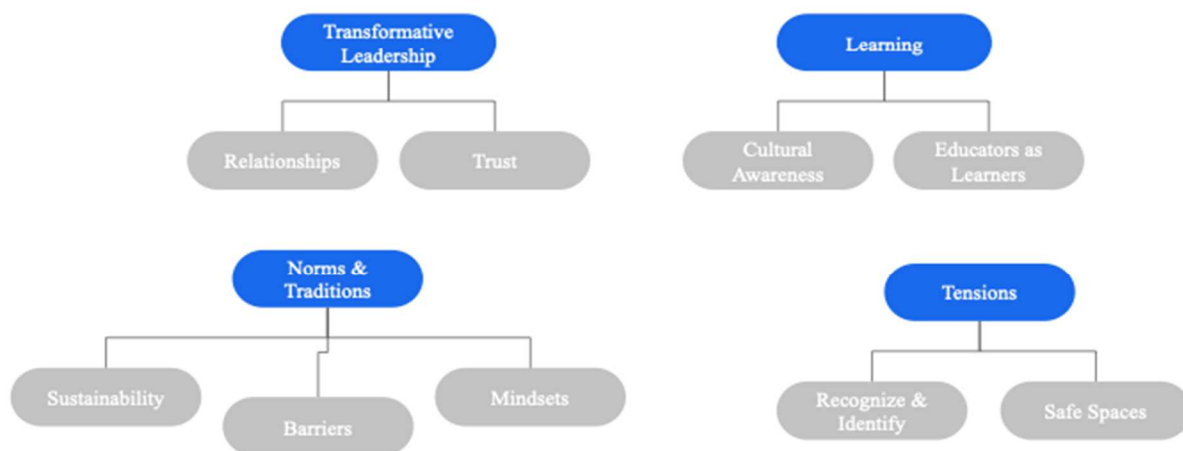
This identification and the recognition of tension is of importance because it reveals the need for conversations to take place. Furthermore, these conversations need to happen in safe spaces. If

safe spaces could be generated amongst educators, this could place emphasis on the importance of conversations amongst students. Ultimately, recognizing this tension could have a positive impact on student learning.

How are we going to ensure that every student, that no student feels threatened, that every student comes to school, and they're in a safe and caring environment. (Participant 9)

Figure 6

Axial Coding- Level Two



Selective Coding

Ultimately, both levels of axial coding led to the final stage of selective coding centered around two core themes: mindfulness and safe spaces. Mindfulness made distinct connections to leadership and learning. Safe spaces made connections to mindsets and tensions. Together these themes help build an understanding of how educators and school leaders navigate the competing

values of neo-managerial influenced school improvement efforts. In addition to this, the themes of mindfulness and safe space help to further understand how to productively face change efforts needed to be more equitable and socially just.

The first identified theme to explore is mindfulness. The culture of leadership cannot be thought of without thinking of learning. Though they often are not thought of in the same space, one cannot exist with the other. The fact that “*they need to be knowledgeable leaders, set the course, build it and ask for input*” (Participant 4) was a sentiment shared by most research participants.

Learning connects humanity and makes us uniquely different from all other living things. Humans are interconnected by their learning and are fueled by the continuous desire to work together to problem solve. Learning is a social activity and is ongoing from the beginning of one's life until the end. Leadership is one's ability to apply what they have learned in a way that influences and impacts others towards a common goal. Leadership can look very different from person to person and is based on how and what we learn.

(Journal Entry #8)

All research participants acknowledged that leadership requires learning at some level.

With learning comes a level of clarity, forward thinking and the requirement of transformative attention. This kind of work requires building relationships and trust. The importance of trust and building relationships is highly incongruent from neo-managerialism. The fact that school improvement is dependent on trust and relationships is an important finding.

The foundation of all learning is relationships built on trust, respect, and a safe space to have hard conversations. Until we start having conversations about racism, our own biases, practices we have seen that we know are wrong because they do more harm rather than good,

and name all of those practices as they are, we will never achieve social justice in our system. As leaders, we have to lead our staff toward a common purpose based on what we truly believe about children and how they learn. If we say that we believe all children can learn at high levels, yet we implement practices that prevent our marginalized groups from doing so. Leaders must feel safe being able to challenge these practices. (Journal Entry #1)

This research participant spoke to the fact that the impact of mindfulness on leadership and learning is of importance and value to school improvement and reform efforts.

All research participants were mindful of the impact leadership and learning had on cultural awareness and equity building. Although eight (8) out of ten (10) research participants were members of the Equity Committee, it is also important to note that, in light of current events regarding racial inequities, several research participants spoke to issues surrounding diversity and social justice.

If learning and leading are relational, connected and critically reflective, with concern for others, and for systems and ourselves, then it follows that leaders with a focus on social justice can guide school communities toward teaching and learning that fosters a shared goal of learning toward social justice. The work overall (of leading and learning) must be inquiry driven, and we must foster a habit of asking questions that expand thinking beyond our own views and our fixed traditions. Learners and leaders must both ask - How is it that we've come to see it as "normal" to do things this way? Who is benefited and who is harmed in doing things this way? How could harm be reduced/eliminated? How can we understand our options? (Journal Entry #2)

What do we believe about kids? What do we believe about diversity? What do we believe about the experiences that we're providing our students? Until we actually have a

common why behind what we're doing every day, there's no foundation to have those conversations. (Participant 3)

Leadership and learning need to do more than just share the same space as far as school improvement and reform are concerned. Educators need to be mindful that they share the same space in order to fully value how this connection can positively impact school improvement efforts of any kind.

Another core theme that was present in the findings was the importance of safe spaces. Within this theme is the value of recognizing the importance of mindsets and tensions. Safe spaces are identified as an invaluable vessel in which to have conversations. Mindsets help determine how you define learning and tensions help identify how to navigate any barriers that hinder learning to occur. This is of importance in recognizing any norms and traditions that inhibit what is ultimately identified as effective learning. Ultimately it is critical that these mindsets and identified tensions are named and shared through conversations. These conversations allow leaders and educators to share what they're experiencing without the fear of being judged and without repercussions. Furthermore, in order for these conversations to maintain their value and effectiveness in positively shaping change efforts, they need to happen in safe spaces.

The data revealed that though the need for safe spaces in which meaningful and productive conversations were important, they unfortunately lacked consistency in value and presence.

Until we feel safe, being able to do that and we don't feel like having those conversations that you're going to have repercussions, then it's never going to be okay.

(Participant 4)

I think that oftentimes teachers are fearful of having conversations for fear of not saying the right things, maybe I don't know. (Participant 7)

And yet, the mindset plays a huge role in safe spaces as indicated by one research participant.

No kids should feel unsafe and by the way of feeling unsafe right we have the same thing there. It's an emotion. Where's that come from? Because that's the emotional aspect, even if the child is perfectly safe in school. But it doesn't matter when the child's brain operates on, okay, you are bigger than me and bigger people usually mistreat me right? That emotion is more important than saying, no, school is safe, right. No, it's not safe, not for that kid because we need to work on the underlying causes. We need to work on the fact that that kid doesn't come to school seeing adults as trustworthy, right, reality or not. And so, you know, these things are important. They're critically important because that kid cannot function the same way, until we take care of the mental behavioral stuff, right, because they just don't feel safe, and you know you can be warm and everything, unless the intensive services are there, you know, that's equity work. (Participant 9)

The barriers of fear, mental behavioral conditions, and emotions can and do impact learning.

And so, as norms and traditions can persist as potential barriers, it becomes the educator's role to identify and recognize the fact that safe spaces are first to be valued and then created by leaders and teachers alike. In addition to this, it is placing a value on mindfulness that can ultimately lead to the provision of safe spaces for conversations to take place.

A key to providing a safe space for conversations to take place is acknowledging that naming and identifying tension can release tension. Being able to recognize and identify the tension is key to understanding it and ultimately working toward a resolution. Research participants shared insight into some of the tensions they were facing.

I wish we were having conversations about things that are happening in our buildings that are not are not examples of equity. I wish we were having conversations about who we are as a school division, and how we can make the necessary changes so that we can be open and welcoming and understanding of everyone (Participant 4)

We're not talking enough. And I think part of it is that people think well I'm not biased.

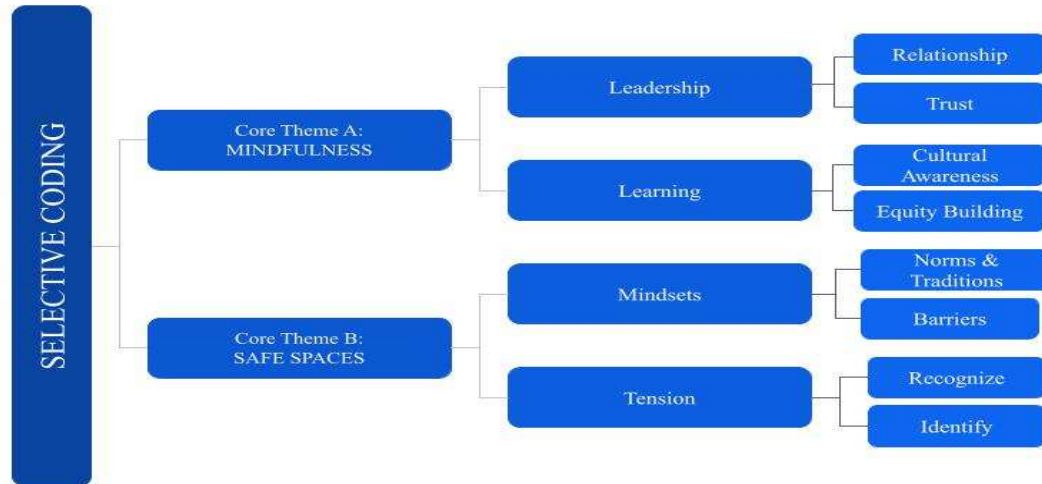
You don't realize your bias until you ask the right questions. (Participant 7)

I feel like I'm more prepared to defend myself. How do I defend others, you know?

(Participant 8)

I am focusing on changing myself and continually refocusing the lens through which I see social justice needs and my own bias. (Journal Entry #3)

Most research participants shared a story or sentiment naming a variety of tensions and/or identifying a personal struggle where a safe space free from judgement would have been welcomed for professional and personal growth.

Figure 7*Selective Coding***Findings**

The purpose of this study was to attempt to learn from the lived experiences of educators in how they navigate the competing values in the theoretical paradox in the context of school improvement. Myran & Sutherland (2019) identify school leaders as continuing to serve with an authoritative form of management that is being identified as neo-Taylorism or neo-managerialism. As a result of continuing to “place undue faith in scientific management” (Myran & Sutherland, 2019, p. 660) the findings appear misaligned with the goals of learning. The goals of present day learning include critical thinking and critiquing status quos. The findings highlight that in practice these research participants readily spoke to the paradox as identified by Myran and Sutherland (2019); expressing notable misgivings and cautions about top-down, linear and recursive styles of leadership as being ineffective, particularly for our goals of equity and justice.

Leadership, as described by the research participants, has distributive, transformative properties that are dependent on learning, a departure from the dominant neo-managerial paradigm. This type of learning influences school improvement practices.

We've taught kids to memorize things and to pass tests but really, you know, the higher order thinking and being able to know metacognition thinking about thinking, I think that's really the ultimate goal or education. I don't necessarily believe that every student should go to college. I think that, you know, preparing students for a workforce and to be productive citizens is the most important thing we can do. (Participant 2)

Research participants recognize their role in preparing students for roles outside of the classroom and beyond the workforce. The findings support the connection of leadership and learning and the ultimate impact this relationship has on the structures and practices of school improvement.

When we talk about scholarship, that is scholarship for purpose, you know, it's purposeful learning, you know we have to define the purpose and the purpose is that we become better citizens you know that we take care of the community. (Participant 9)

A core theme that was present was mindfulness. Leadership at all levels, building and central office were mindful of the type of leadership and learning that was needed to positively impact school improvement reform efforts. However, an important finding was an incongruent pattern within this theme that presented itself in the LETRS initiative. Though central office leadership focused on the managerial climate in which to implement the literacy initiative, building leadership and teachers wished for the reform effort to mirror more the transformative style of leadership that would also allow the initiative to be mindful of equity, cultural awareness and diversity.

If I do not build the capacity to challenge their thinking and reflect on the way that they're teaching all students in the classroom and if I don't build their capacity to understand how to meet their needs, then I'm not doing my job, because it doesn't matter what LETRS training you have, it doesn't matter what your thoughts are on the way you're teaching reading it doesn't matter what books you read on brain science, if you in your heart don't have a belief that every child can learn and that every child deserves to learn at high levels, regardless of who they are and where they've come from, then none of that stuff matters. (Participant 3)

It was evident amongst most of the participants that equity mattered. More specifically, it was evident that diversity mattered and that being culturally aware and responsive was a priority amongst leadership. Though purposeful learning is a shared goal of all school leaders, it was not evident that the initiative was valued for the purposeful learning that it promoted beyond the academic aspect. This was an important goal for building level leadership to be mindful of amongst their teachers and staff.

We can say right now that we're going to give all the additional help that we can give to students that are struggling with their learning. And that's fine, that's what we're supposed to be. We want to help every kid that we can, but that word equity. I don't hear it enough. We need to hear it more. We need to research it more. And we need to see where some of our practices, both intentional and unintentional, can be improved. Because we have some unintentional things that we're doing, some of our biases and some of our practices. We may not even know that we're not doing it right. We need to be reminded of what we need to do better. (Participant 7)

The other core theme that was identified in the findings is the importance of safe spaces.

This was evident at the onset of the data analysis. It was evident that in order to process the bi-directional learning that was occurring, it was necessary to have open and honest conversations. However, in order to have open and honest dialogue, there needs to be a judgement free, punitive free safe space where people could voice their opinions, concerns, feelings and questions. Though there were pockets of this on the individual level or in a small group level, such as within a team or amongst friends, there was nothing like this present on a large collective level or amongst colleagues with differing opinions.

We've never talked as administrators. I can't think of one time we've ever talked about how we are truly supporting the needs of our students and our families. (Participant 3)

When we were simply talking about academic reform efforts such as the LETRS initiative, it's easy to think of linear top-down leadership or even distributive leadership. But when you shift mindsets of thinking about LETRS with an equity lens with transformative properties, a safe space is identified as being needed.

And I think that's hard to, I think that that's not a reform effort, there's no, there's no one single check the box reform effort against critically examining and trying to expand a historical narrative. That's curricular work. That's relational work. That's self-reflective work. So, do you ask, How do people support that change? How does that change happen? I think it happens at the personal, I think. I think it has to happen in personal, professional, authentic ways. (Participant 4)

In order for educators to critically examine reform efforts that traditionally go against the historical narrative, a safe space for conversations is needed in order to generate effective progress.

A prerequisite for safe spaces to be established is that there needs to be an emphasis on relationship building and trust. This relates to the theme of mindfulness because it alludes to the state of being aware and conscious of something, especially in regard to one's own feelings. Safe spaces need to be taken seriously at all levels. An important finding is that most research participants not only wanted to partake in these conversations, even those that were uncomfortable and difficult, many believed they were necessary in order to move forward.

We recognize that difficult conversations are the norm, not the exception to deep and authentic lifetime learning. (Participant 4)

I think honestly, we have people who are willing to do the work and we have teachers who want to have the conversations. (Participant 3)

I'm aware and now I gotta make cognitive changes and you know I gotta be mindful of how I'm handling people, so I've had conversations with some of the supervisors here. (Participant 5)

Many research participants recognized the need for difficult conversations to take place in order to impact effective reform. In addition to this finding is the willingness amongst participants to engage in difficult conversations in pursuit of purposeful and meaningful learning. In this aspect, mindful conversations taking place in safe spaces is an identified way in which educators can navigate the theorized paradox in the context of school improvement.

Summary of Findings

Taken together, the findings here highlight the lived experiences of educators in how they navigated the competing values within the paradox our field faces between the foundation in scientific management and the call for a learning, cognition, equity and social justice frame of reference which is needed to foster contemporary school improvement goals. In this way, the

theorized paradox described by Myran & Sutherland (2019) is clearly seen as real amongst present day educators. The participants in this study described the structures and practices of school improvement as representing a number of tensions between the historically rooted pull to manage, control, and direct the school environment, and their social justice driven impulse to engage, explore, build trusting relationships, and to learn. Interestingly, the findings don't fit squarely within the structure of the research questions which separates the constructs of organizational structures and norms, and definitions of learning and social justice. Research participants talked about these as interconnected and fluidly talked about structure, learning and social justice.

Surprisingly, despite the historically rooted tendency for the field to frame learning within a neo-managerial framework, these educators defined learning in rich, human, and person centered ways, emphasizing the reciprocal and dynamic interactions between school leaders, teachers, and students. Similarly, these educators defined social justice as closely related to learning, with the analysis of the transcripts revealing a fluid dynamic between the two. Participants made connections between learning and social justice, expressing a dynamic between the two which focused on building trusting relationships, respect, safe spaces for discourse on race and other marginalizing characteristics, and bold self-reflection. As one participant said, *Until we start having conversations about racism, our own biases, practices we have seen that we know are wrong because they do more harm rather than good, and name all of those practices as they are, we will never achieve social justice in our system.* In this way, for this population, talking about how they defined learning and social justice as separate constructs would create a false dichotomy. Instead, they talked about learning and social justice in fluid

and dynamic ways, recognizing that in the learning context, you can't talk about social justice without revealing your values and beliefs about the nature of learning.

Regarding how these educators experienced this paradox through their shared stories, grounded in a belief that all children can learn, they articulated their observations of how the organizational norms of the field, such as how we've interpreted and responded to the accountability movement, have served to perpetuate organizational structures, beliefs, and practices that can erode this foundational value. As one participant said, *If we say that we believe all children can learn at high levels, yet we implement practices that prevent our marginalized groups from doing so. Leaders must feel safe being able to challenge these practices.* Here we can see that these research participants, who are invested in working towards social justice and increasing student achievement, recognize learning, social justice and the limitations of neo-managerial norms and traditions as a set of interrelated constructs that need to be grappled with together – not broken out into separate goals and interventions. As one of the participants said, *The work overall (of leading and learning) must be inquiry driven, and we must foster a habit of asking questions that expand thinking beyond our own views and our fixed traditions. Learners and leaders must both ask - How is it that we've come to see it as "normal" to do things this way? Who is benefited and who is harmed in doing things this way? How could harm be reduced/eliminated? How can we understand our options?*

Driven by a desire to bring about real change and to boldly address the call for equity-based improvements, the research participants defied the field's historic foundations in scientific management. Furthermore, they endeavored to build trusting relationships, learning about cultural awareness and building toward equity, to develop mindsets that overcame the limitations

of norms and traditions, and navigated the tensions between the competing theories of action they faced. Finally, as they navigated the competing pressures of calls for improved student learning and improving the social justice climate of schools within the confines of many of the neo-managerial constructs they encountered, they expressed the need for mindfulness and creating and supporting safe spaces. In this way answering the final question of how these educators coped with the challenges of this paradox, they actually charted a potential roadmap for how we might better collectively face these challenges. This roadmap emphasizes the importance of building relationships and trust, cultural awareness, equity building, challenging norms and traditions that don't serve our students, overcoming barriers, and identifying and recognizing the tensions within our organizational structures that undermine our collective goals.

CHAPTER 5

School reform and improvement efforts are a natural and necessary part of the public education system. Grounded in a traditional scientific management influenced theory of action, efforts have historically focused on improving the productivity and efficiency of the school organization with the goal of causing student learning. However, since the dawn of organized public schooling, our collective understanding about human cognition has evolved in ways that go largely unrecognized by the dominant paradigm of educational leadership. Unfortunately, what has not evolved is our reliance on neo-managerial leadership that is conceptually and practically ill-equipped to effectively lead these reform and improvement efforts. In this way, the neo-managerial climate of leadership serves as a barrier and a source of tension in making progress in systemic change and improvement efforts.

America's public school system is currently facing a period in time when deep systemic changes need to be made. These change efforts are in response to inequitable practices and socially unjust circumstances in which learning is occurring for many students. This need for reform does not only impact identified marginalized students, but all students and their ability to access and engage in purposeful and meaningful learning. America's public school system cannot afford to repeatedly engage in ineffective reform efforts (Cuban, 1990).

At the onset of this study, little was known about how educators navigated the competing values within the theorized paradox of leadership and learning and how it relates to school improvement efforts. The findings revealed a potential roadmap of how educators navigate this lived paradox. This is of importance because in order for educators to collectively be prepared to effectively navigate school improvement efforts, they must first understand the challenges they truly face in order to be productive and responsive to the need for change (Brown, 2004). This

study used shared stories, experiences and insights from a purposeful sampling of educators within a small school district to help understand what and why it is necessary for educators to navigate these change efforts within a climate that is no longer conducive to neo-managerial forms of leadership.

Myran and Sutherland (2019) reinforce this correlation, mirroring contemporary research (e.g., Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Murphy, 2013; Robinson et. al, 2008) in stating how the influence of scientific management on administration and leadership relied on the assumption of a direct linear path to its effect on learning. The neo-managerial leadership climate is in direct contrast to the current empirical evidence of bi-directional and reciprocal interactions between students and educators that support and scaffold learning. This incongruence presents a barrier to effective improvement efforts and in many instances leads to tensions amongst educators. These barriers and tensions have the potential to hinder progress if left unchecked. In addition to this source of hindering progress, is the fact that public education continues to “place undue faith in scientific management” (Myran & Sutherland, 2019, p. 660). This is misaligned with the goals of learning, as the goals of present day learning include critical thinking and critiquing status quos. Arguably, school systems cannot afford to operate within these incongruencies, as sustainable change efforts are highly needed to successfully navigate the social justice inequities identified and perpetuated by current policies and practices.

A key finding of this study was how the theoretical paradox between the neo-managerial norms of educational leadership and the science of learning was experienced by this group of educators. In this way, at least for these educators, this paradox is more than a theory, but substantiated by their lived experiences. School leaders continue to serve with an authoritative

style of management that is being identified as neo-Taylorism or neo-managerialism (Myran & Sutherland, 2019). However, as these participants expressed, leadership can no longer be thought about as a top-down linear approach, as was the case with the managerial-style of the industrial era. As pointed out by Sawyer (2009), the scientific management influenced managerial approach to school leadership was well established before there was a systematic science of learning. As such, the norms and habits of public schools were developed with an eye towards efficiency, productivity, and with the assumptions that learning could be understood, predicted, and controlled in universalistic ways consistent with producing manufactured goods. As present day society increasingly calls for more learning-oriented and socially just school organizational structures, it becomes clear that the accountability era, with its foundations in neo-managerialism, cannot support these goals.

Given our growing understanding from the learning sciences, the field needs to shift to leadership and organizational outlooks grounded in the science of learning. School leaders need to take on a more reciprocal and bi-directional approach to how they think about learning. This requires more of a transformational and instructional style of leadership. Furthermore, this requires leadership and learning to be thought of in the same context along with school improvement and reform efforts. This is where it begins to be understood not only the direct impact leadership has on learning, but the overall difference that leadership can make in terms of students' success (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008; Manna, 2015; Orphanos & Orr, 2014; Robinson et al., 2008; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003, Myran & Sutherland, 2019). Myran and Sutherland (2019) evidenced this by stating that the 'scripted curricula' and 'prescriptive efforts' (Au, 2011; Myran & Sutherland, 2019; Ravitch, 2016) both disempowered teachers and "reduced opportunities for students to be co- constructors

of knowledge (p. 685). In this aspect, neo-managerialism is incongruent with the science of learning, the goals of social justice, and calls for genuine improvements in student learning.

Though school improvement and reform efforts are still based on the academic needs of students, they also require an equitable and culturally responsive lens in regard to their approach. Brown (2004) cites numerous scholars (e.g. Cochran-Smith et al., 1999; Grogan, 2000; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1995; Shields & Oberg, 2000) who continue to “advocate a critique of educational systems in terms of access, power, and privilege based on race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, language, background, ability, and/or socioeconomic position” (p. 79). What is missing however, is a robust discourse on the science of learning and how our traditional organizational structures are conceptually and practically incapable of supporting the kind of deep, lasting, and transferable learning. The accountability era is noted for top-down managerial style leadership that undermined educators and student “voice” alike. Historically, those in leadership positions were and typically continue to be high powered white men (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017) of privilege who often had direct connections with the media and those of high political status. This reiterates that there was and continues to be a “disproportionate authority” in educational reform efforts (Tyack & Cuban, 1995) by those who were not necessarily directly involved in schools. Furthermore, those in leadership positions do not necessarily mirror the marginalized and underrepresented voices not always present at the table. This leads to a critical finding that leading with a diverse and culturally responsive lens is critical in being mindful of equity.

The literature and the findings both support the fact that the interrelationship between leadership and learning is critical to meaningful and purposeful student learning. Such learning is possible when guided by the rich scientific evidence available to us since the cognitive

revolution but hindered under the philosophical and practical limitations of scientific management and neo-managerialism. This, in turn, requires educators, from division leadership, building leaders, teachers, and professors of education to build critical awareness of these interrelated constructs - the science of learning, the calls for equity and social justice, and the need to redesign school organizations to meet the academic needs of students from diverse backgrounds. In order for educators to meet the needs of their students, they must first be mindful of their personal awareness of their needs as learners and of their students' needs as learners. This mindfulness takes courageous conversations, which can only happen in safe spaces. An additional requirement is for transformational leadership to build trust and relationships in which collective capacity and awareness can thrive and grow. In this context, the recognition and mindfulness of the interrelationship between leadership and learning has the potential to not only grow but sustain effective school reform efforts.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical implications of this study indicates the potential to impact school practices and policy. Like many reform efforts, it's difficult to shape and inform policy without simultaneously thinking about improving practice. The school district in this study is currently undergoing an academic school improvement initiative in reading K-5. Simultaneously, the county has a newly developed Equity Committee for the purpose of assuring policies and practices within the district meet the diverse needs of each and every student it serves. In order to fully embark on a reform effort of any new initiative, it is imperative that those leading the learning efforts do so with an equitable and social justice lens to ensure that all students' needs are being met. Leading with a learning and social justice lens provides a platform for teachers

and school leaders to engage students in transformative learning by utilizing critical thinking skills and reflective practices. This is in congruence to the interactive learning process which has been identified as being highly beneficial to students as learners (Myran & Sutherland, 2019).

As described in chapter 2, critical theory is used to understand how neo-managerialism continues to work within schools. This is antithetical to the leadership that is needed in present day schools. Brown (2004) acknowledges how critical theory “recognizes and advocates for the social change role and responsibility of educational leaders” (p.78). In this way, critical theory serves as a tool to help understand how the role of values such as power and authority impact structures, in order to challenge them and ultimately advocate for change (Brown, 2004). Critical theory seeks to examine and critique change, unlike traditional theory which seeks to explain change (Bohman, 2016). The theoretical implication is that the leadership that is traditionally present is in direct contrast to the leadership that is presently needed for today’s change efforts.

In addition to this implication, using critical race theory (CRT), as also described in chapter 2, further indicates how underexplored this identified school improvement initiative is in terms of diversity and cultural awareness. CRT offers a specific lens that allows us to be conscious of the fact that many “experience the world in different ways on different occasions, because of who we are” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017, p. 63). This realization is of great importance, specifically when paired with the recognition that the dominant scientific management and neo-managerial norms and traditions that shape our field are antithetical to the goals of learning and equity and social justice, despite these foundations continuing to shape the dominant leadership and administration paradigms (Myran & Sutherland, 2019). CRT assists in exploring the patterns and inequities within the system. This is of value to further understand

how to recognize, explore and rectify any bold assertions about marginalizing factors that are built into schools' organizational systems.

America is a country that has and continues to utilize race to create a system of hierarchy, superiority and value based distinctively on skin color, culture and ethnicity (Kendi, 2016; Reynolds & Kendi, 2020). Over time, this system has been normalized and used to influence the social, economic, political and legal climates that permeate almost every aspect of America's society, including America's public school system (Reynolds & Kendi, 2020). As a result, these normalized values, beliefs, and structures become largely invisible to the passive observer. In this way, CRT is a powerful lens in which to analyze the specific findings of this study.

A key finding was that the space between learning, equity, culture and social justice is blurred as noted by the research participants within this study. In this way, the interrelationships of learning, equity, culture and social justice were notable. Discussing and exploring each of these areas in isolation is potentially a short-sighted and ineffective approach in making improvement efforts. Though I had originally set out to shed light on social justice issues, most research participants were interested in looking at school improvement and reform efforts through a diversity lens including race, gender, special needs, and cultural awareness where equity and social justice impacted learning in a shared space.

The theoretical implication of this finding could prove important in future studies in how theories pay attention to looking at issues in concert rather than in isolation. This study initially embarked on a path identified by Friere, "to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Friere, 1994, p. 17), specifically in the area of social justice. The implication of looking at the interrelatedness of issues, specifically with a CRT lens, has the potential to further utilize the relationship of

leadership and learning to impact necessary change efforts of practice and policy that specifically undermine effective student learning to those who are marginalized or underrepresented by those in positions of power.

Implications for Future Research

One implication for future research would be to utilize the findings of mindfulness and safe spaces to further explore how educators navigate organizational change. Cultural responsiveness and awareness in regard to school improvement and reform efforts were identified as areas of interest to many research participants. In this way, transformative leadership was noted as being necessary to engage learners in mindful and courageous conversations. These conversations could only take place in safe spaces that are founded on relationship building and trust. The model identified in the selective coding (Figure 7) stresses the importance of mindfulness and safe spaces in the sustainability of reform efforts that impact student learning. The findings of this study concerning mindfulness and safe spaces could be further explored to indicate whether or not these factors truly impact student learning.

Another implication for future research would be the impact of safe spaces within organizations. Brown's (2004) reference of Shields, Larocque, and Oberg (2002) states:

Wise educational leaders will learn to create psychological spaces for genuine exploration of difference; they will initiate conversations where problems and challenges may be identified and discussed; and they will create a climate in which staff and students feel safe in clarifying their assumptions to deal with cultural dissonance. (p. 130).

Specifically, an area of future research could investigate what, if any, impact safe spaces and open conversations provide for an organization in terms of improvement efforts. This could

particularly be of use particularly in systems, where organizational members do not feel like they have a safe space to have open and honest conversations concerning improvement efforts.

Implications for Practice

As we look to the future, we are more focused on applied bi-directional learning of the student, teacher, leader and the community. An implication for practice is having educators thinking of leadership and learning in the same context. The findings within this study indicates the interconnectedness and bi-directional reliance of both leadership and learning. Present day society is diverse with a strong cultural awareness. With this sense of awareness comes a sense of responsiveness and responsibility. It is the responsibility of educators to practice being responsive to this change. Present day schools and reform efforts require leadership abilities that complement today's transformative learners. As stated in chapter 2, in essence, "leadership that remains rooted in scientific management is incongruent with the transformative leadership that is needed today. And this incongruence is the crux to a highly under-identified paradox within our current education system."

Myran and Sutherland (2019) take this one step further in acknowledging that these norms and traditions go as far as breeding 'assumptions, biases and misconceptions about learning' (p. 678). An implication in practice is how educators navigate these assumptions and biases in present day policies and practices. This is of importance for researchers and practitioners to consider how they might not only navigate these norms and traditions themselves but push the boundaries of neo-managerialism and promote new leadership and organizational theory better aligned to our contemporary goals. Teachers and school leaders have been navigating top-down managerial leadership since the industrial revolution. An implication of the findings of this study is for educators to be encouraged to have courageous conversations that

challenge any assumptions, biases or misconceptions about learning that is incongruent with equitable learning for all students.

The shared stories and experiences within this study indicated the importance of conversations. The purpose of engaging in meaningful and purposeful conversations in a collective effort was to move learning forward in an effective manner. An implication in practice is for educators to engage in meaningful and purposeful conversations in an ongoing manner with the goal of promoting effective student learning. Furthermore, these conversations need to happen on a collective level, where there is trust and safety. In this way, difficult conversations are shared in a manner in which people could learn from others' experiences and perspectives. This implication is of importance because if practiced, perhaps beneficial conversations towards effective progress, specifically in the areas of equity and social justice, could occur at an organizational level, thus, impacting student learning.

Conclusion

School improvement and reform efforts take courage. It requires school leaders to disrupt a pattern of leadership (Lac & Baxley, 2019; Lak & Cumings Mansfield, 2017) that has been rooted in scientific management dating back to the industrial era. It takes courage to cite what is equitable, socially unjust and learn from our past mistakes. This requires mindfulness, safe spaces, courageous conversations and transformative thinking. Members of a community of knowers are valued for their pluralistic and dynamic outlooks rather than pressured to passively conform to existing canons of knowledge (Adams & Myran, 2021). In order to put this into practice, we need to first require this from our leaders, who will then encourage this from our teachers. It is then, we can expect this of our students and truly make sustainable change not only within our education system, but within our national and global communities.

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APPENDIX A

PROSPECTIVE PARTICIPANT E-MAIL INVITATION AND INFORMED CONSENT

SUBJECT: Research Study for Equity Committee Members

INTRODUCTION: You are invited to participate in a research study conducted at Old Dominion University (ODU) for the Educational Leadership Department. The investigator of this study is Donica Hadley. Approximately 12 participants will be enrolled in this study. Initial participation should require about thirty to sixty minutes of your time.

ELIGIBILITY: You are eligible to participate in the study if you are an acting member of the RCPS Equity Committee or serve in a position of the RCPS community and have been an active or inactive participant in the growth and/or improvement of the learning and innovation within any of innovative initiatives that have taken place during the past five school years.

PURPOSE: The purpose of the study is to examine the lived experiences of educators in how they navigate practices of school improvement all while ensuring effective reform efforts are taking place. The results of the study will serve as data for Mrs. Hadley's dissertation requirement towards completion of the PhD Program at ODU. Responses will remain completely anonymous.

PROCEDURES: If you participate in the study, you can expect the following as a participant: a single interview lasting between thirty and sixty minutes. The interview will be video recorded to help the researcher accurately capture your experience as you described. The recording will only be observed by the researcher for the purpose of this study. Participation in this study is voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time. There is no compensation for participating in the study. There is no penalty or negative consequence for discontinuing participation.

You will also be asked to respond to several questions in an informal journal type format. You will be asked to record your responses on a Google Form Questionnaire that will only be viewed by the researcher for the purpose of this study.

RISKS, INCONVENIENCES, AND DISCOMFORTS: It may be inconvenient for you to participate in the interview.

BENEFITS: Potential benefits for participating in this study include 1) opportunity for personal and professional reflection, 2) professional development points. There is no financial compensation.

ANONYMITY: Records of information you provide for the research study and your personally identifying information (name, school, or other identifying characteristics) will not be linked or shared in any way. It will not be possible to identify you as the person who provided any specific information for the study.

QUESTIONS: You are encouraged to ask questions, at any time, that will help you to understand how this study will be performed and/or how it will affect you. You may contact the investigator, Donica O. Hadley at hadl001@odu.edu or the investigator's faculty advisor, Dr. Steven Myran at smyrna@odu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about this study or your rights as a study participant, you may contact Adam Rubenstein, Director of Compliance, Office of Research with the Human Subjects Research Office at ODU.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

By signing this form, you are saying several things. You are saying that you have read this form or have had it read to you, that you are satisfied that you understand this form, the research study, and its risks and benefits. The researchers should have answered any questions you may have had about the research. If you have any questions later on, then the researchers should be able to answer them:

Donica O. Hadley

hadl001@odu.edu 540-271-2212

If at any time you feel pressured to participate, or if you have any questions about your rights or this form, then you should call Dr. Laura Chezan, the current chair of the Darden College of Education and Professional Studies Human Subjects Review Committee at 757-683-7055 or lchezan@odu.edu.

And importantly, by signing below, you are telling the researcher YES, that you agree to participate in this study. The researcher should give you a copy of this form for your records.

Subject's Printed Name and Signature	Date
Witness' Printed Name and Signature (if applicable)	Date

INVESTIGATOR'S STATEMENT

I certify that 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 Printed Name and Signature	Date
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APPENDIX B

Interview Questions

1. How would you define/describe learning?
2. Please describe your decision to join the current Equity Committee.
 - a. What would you identify as pressing issues in need of being addressed in this district?
 - b. In what way do you view the committee as addressing these issues?
 - c. Do you see social justice as a pressing issue in this district?
 - d. How do you define social justice in schools? How does this relate to equity issues?
3. What is your personal goal/hope/idea in terms of the outcome of the work being done as a result of the committee?
 - a. What do you view as the primary mission/vision of this committee?
 - b. What do you feel is the primary role of this committee?
4. Why do you feel as though the formation of this committee is necessary?
5. How are reform efforts decided?
 - a. Who decides them?
 - b. Whose job is it to implement them?
 - c. What are your experiences with how implementation has been met by the teachers? School leaders?
6. What do you feel are the key aspects in assuring reform efforts are effectively implemented?
7. Have you ever experienced any barriers/obstacles to reform efforts being implemented?

8. How do school leaders overcome these barriers? Teachers?
9. What has been your experience with past reform efforts within this school district?

APPENDIX C

Research Participant Journal Entry Questions

Which of the following best describes your current position of employment?

- a. Teacher
- b. Faculty
- c. Educational Leader

Number of years in education: _____

1. What would you describe as the ultimate purpose/goal/definition of learning for K-12 students?
2. What type of leadership do you feel is needed in present day K-12 schools?
3. Do you feel as though the type of leadership you described aligns with your definition of learning? Why or why not?
4. How would you define/describe social justice?
5. Please identify/connect what you view as the relationship between learning, leadership and social justice.
6. Based on your response to the previous question, please describe how you feel about navigating any change efforts that involve equitable practices in terms of social justice?

CURRICULUM VITAE

DONICA OUCKAMA HADLEY

4110 Sabrina Ct., Penn Laird, VA 22846 | 540-271-2212 | hadleydo@jmu.edu

TEACHING/LEADERSHIP INTERESTS

- Empowering teacher leaders and school leaders to be positive and effective agents of change
- Emphasizing an awareness and implementation of creative, innovative, inclusive and equitable practices in policies, curriculum and school culture
- Continued research on teaching and learning practices and issues through a social justice lens at the higher education level
- Building collaborative efforts amongst higher education and local school communities in an effort to build bi-directional learning opportunities for the purpose of sustainable growth

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Educational Leadership, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA

Doctoral candidate-completed all course work and successfully passed oral and written comprehensive exams 08/2019. Currently working on dissertation with an anticipated completion date of Summer 2021.

Dissertation title-Exploring the Incongruence Between Traditional Neo-Managerial Norms, the Science of Learning and the Goals of Social Justice: A Phenomenological Study of Educators Lived Experiences Inside this Paradox

Dissertation Chair/Advisor: Dr. Steven Myran

M.Ed., Education Administration, University of Massachusetts Lowell,

Lowell, MA

Bachelor of Science, Elementary Education N-9 Concentration: English,
State University of New York At Oswego, Oswego, NY

WORK HISTORY

Academic Experience

- **Instructor**, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA, Fall 2013- Spring 2015; Fall 2020- Spring 2021

Courses Taught

- ELED 311/321: Practicum with a Focus on Learners and Learning
- ELED 411: Practicum Supervisor
- ELED 510: Creativity and the Arts in Elementary Education
- ELED 570: Learning and Teaching in the Elementary Education Curriculum
- ELED 621: Practicum Supervisor
- ECED 372: Introduction to Early Childhood Education
- ECED 412/512: Natural and Social Sciences in PK-3
- ECED 508: Observation and Study of the Young Child

School Experience

- **Assistant Principal**, Rockingham County Public Schools (RCPS), Plains Elementary, Harrisonburg, VA, 2015-2020
- **Principal**, Lincoln Public Schools, Lincoln, MA 2004-2006
- **Grade 3 Classroom Teacher**, Lincoln Public Schools, Lincoln, MA, 2000-2004
- **Grade 4 Classroom Teacher**, Spotsylvania County Schools, Spotsylvania, VA, 1998-2000

AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

Woman of Excellence Award, 2019

- Nominated by RCPS Central Office Director to receive this honor in recognition of a woman who has demonstrated a commitment to making a positive difference within the Rockingham County community

Rockingham Educational Foundation, Inc (REFI) Grant, 2018

- "If We Build It, They Will 'Calm'" - REFI Grant awarded on behalf of assisting to build a school-wide sensory room

Sallie Mae First Class Teacher Award, 1998

- Nominated and chosen to represent Spotsylvania County as First Year Teacher of the Year

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS & PRESENTATIONS

Invited speaker at College of Education (CoE) Scholarship Breakfast, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA, October 2019- *Audience: CoE Scholarship Recipients, family members and faculty*

Invited speaker for Elementary Education Orientation, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA, August 2019- *Audience: ELED students and faculty*

"Rethinking Classroom Management Practices," Plains Elementary, Timberville, VA, October 2015- *Audience: Plains Elementary faculty*

PUBLICATIONS

"Starting Up a Sensory Room," published in *Principal*, 99(4) March/April, 2020, 44-46.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Rockingham County Public Schools- Equity Committee

This is a newly formed committee tasked with ensuring the mission and vision of school policies, curriculum, and practices within the county school system are written and implemented through a lens of equity and social justice in a manner that is intentional and purposeful.

- Committee Member, Fall 2019-Present

CERTIFICATIONS

Virginia Postgraduate Professional License effective July 1, 2020- June, 31, 2029 • Administration and Supervision PreK-12; Elementary Education preK-6

Emergency First Aid Training
CPR/AED Training

MANDT Training/Certified