

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

School Board Governance with Student Equity in Mind: A Case Study Exploring the
Impact of Colorblindness in Educating Black Children in A PK-8 School District

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

By

Linda K. Jones

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The dissertation of Linda K. Jones is approved:

Dr. Jody Dunlap

Date

Dr. Miguel Ceja

Date

Dr. William De La Torre, Chair

Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother; Betty Jean Jones-Hall who passed away as I was completing the final steps in my dissertation journey. My mother always encouraged me in all of my endeavors, and I know that her prayers were covering me through this entire process. A special thank you to my dearest husband and three daughters who for the last three and a half years never let me give up on this journey, even when it meant taking away quality time from them. I couldn't have completed this journey without your words of encouragement, being sounding boards, proofreaders and cheerleaders, allowing me to have the time to complete this process guilt free.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Copyright	ii
Signature Page	iii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
List of Tables	viii
List of Figures.....	ix
Abstract.....	x
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem	4
Research Questions.....	12
Overview of Conceptual Framework	12
Overview of Methodology.....	13
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	20
School Board Influence on Student Inputs and Outcomes	21
Colorblindness	26
Organizing Districts with a Systemic Focus on Equity.....	30
Conceptual Framework.....	34
CHAPTER 3: METHODS	40
Research Design	41
Research Setting and Context.....	42
District Governance.....	46
Data Source and Sampling	47
Role of the Researcher.....	52
Summary.....	54
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND RESULTS.....	56
Entering the Field	57
Structural Misdirection Influenced by Ideological Structures, Statutory Mandates and Processes.....	59
Assessing Capacity of Board and Central Office to Address Issues Beyond the Symptoms	71
Isolation Among Black Students and the Adults Who Advocate on Their Behalf	79
Providing a Parent Counter Narrative	100
The School Board Demonstrates Collective Political Will	116
Summary.....	117

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS.....	119
Summary of the Study	119
Discussion.....	129
Limitations.....	140
Implications for Policy and Practice.....	140
Conclusion.....	143
Recommendations for District, CSBA and Future Research	144
Future Research.....	145
References.....	147
Appendix A: Sky View SD Suspension, Expulsion, and Truancy Report for 2011-12 .	170
Appendix B: Two-Year Summary of Sky View Suspension and Expulsions by Ethnicity and Code Violation	171
Appendix C: Sky View SD Special Education by Enrollment and Disability	172
Appendix D: Document Summary Form.....	173
Appendix E: Theory Driven Codes.....	174
Appendix F: Data-Driven Coding.....	175
Appendix G: School Board Interview Protocols	177
Appendix H: Superintendent Interview Protocol.....	181
Appendix I: Central Office and Principal Administrator Interview Protocols	185
Appendix J: African American Action Committee Interview Protocol.....	190

LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1: Sky View Academic Performance Index Over Seven Years (CDE, 2014)..... 44

Table 3.2: CA Education Code Suspension and Expulsion Descriptions..... 45

Table 4.1: Participant Roles and District Tenure..... 56

Table 4.2: Proportion of Students with Disabilities: Comparisons of AA and EL Learners..... 63

Table 4.3.a: COAs’ Response: How District Managed and Monitored Diversity and Equity 66

Table 4.3.b: Board Members Response: How District Managed and Monitored Diversity And Equity 67

Table 4.3.c: SSA’s Response: How The District Managed and Monitored Diversity and Equity 67

Table 4.4: Board Members Were Asked to Define These Three Constructs..... 70

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Key Linkages Between School Boards and Student Learning, Delagardelle
(2009)..... 25

Figure 2.2: Rorrer et al. Theory of District as Institutional Actor in Systemic Reform
and advancing equity 32

Figure 2.3: Reskins’ Racial Discrimination System..... 35

Figure 2.4: Hill-Collins’ Domains-of-Power Framework 37

Figure 4.2: SVSD 3 Year Average API Comparison 62

Figure 4.5: Summary of Sky Views 2015-16 LCAP Goals..... 72

Figure 4.6: How SVSD’s Mission Statement Will Be Operationalized in Current
District Programs 74

Figure 4.7: Eight Areas of State Priority for LCAPs 77

Figure 5.1: Senge’s Systems Perspective..... 134

Figure 5.2: Minneapolis Public School District Equity Framework..... 135

ABSTRACT

School Board Governance with Student Equity in Mind: A Case Study Exploring the Impact of Colorblindness in Educating Black Children in A PK-8 School District

By

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Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

There are fundamental questions about the way in which varying student populations experience schooling in U.S. public K-12 schools, specifically regarding Black students who face persistent historical challenges to opportunities in schools that have come short of promises made through civil rights laws, national education reform and legal remedies by the U.S. court system. Race-conscious remedies through the courts have been cut short due to legal precedents based on interpretation of the Fourteenth Amendment as colorblind, and those implemented outside the court are almost always politicized. The false assumptions that schools are neutral from societal politics and injustices and that we live in a post-racial society blind many educators to African American students' schooling experiences and social emotional needs as well as to those of the adults who advocate on their behalf. This study consisted of qualitative research of critical ethnography to explore and understand, within a single district, how a school board, as part of a collective of institutional actors over time, understands, influences and responds to the phenomena of disproportionality and access disparity among its Black student population. This study examined this issue as occurring within a socio-political and legal

environment of meritocracy, accountability and colorblindness, and a contemporary phenomenon of racism. Secondly, lacking a common language to discuss the contemporary phenomenon of racism and how it affects the schooling experiences of a historically marginalized group of children, this study also used Hill-Collins' Domain of Power as a conceptual framework to understand and explore how both racism and anti-racism are contextualized within a school district. Findings exposed gaps in school board members' and central office administrators' knowledge of systems thinking, and how ideologies, district and school structures, processes and practices, intersect and reproduce the forms of oppression that cause distributive and cumulative injustices among ascriptive student groups. Implications present a need for a discursive instrument to identify and deconstruct the structures and mechanisms that cause inequity and limit access for Black students.

Keywords: racial disproportionality, access disparity, colorblind, accountability, school board governance, equity, racial literacy

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

We can't solve a problem no one is willing to name ~Race Forward (formerly Applied Research Center)

In 2008, the United States elected Barack Hussein Obama as its first bi-racial president, yet the color line that permeated the 20th century remains prominent in the 21st. Some sixty years since *Brown v. Board of Education*, part of the fabric of American democracy is the haunting gap between affirmations and actions. Every day, Black students in public schools across America end the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance with “and justice for all.” We have embraced a color-blind system of education and the popular mantra that all children can learn and achieve at high levels, regardless of where they live or the color of their skin. Yet, there is a denial through actions and, often, intentional avoidance of the ways in which racism, bias and low expectations are deeply embedded and manifest themselves within systems of public schooling (Blanchett, 2006; Brown, 2009; Hilliard, 2001; Hochschild, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2009, and Noguera, 2008).

In a post-racial America, colorblindness, or color neutrality, is one way American institutional domains such as law and education manage diversity and maintain systems of power (Apfelbaum, Norton, & Sommers, 2012; Hill-Collins, 2009; Wells, 2014; Wiecek, 2012). Supreme Court Chief Justice Roberts’ opinion in the case of *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No 1* (PICS) 551 U.S. 70 stated, “The way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race” (2007). In line with America’s ideal of individualism, on this statement alone, many Americans and policy makers’ understanding of racism is limited to interpersonal

relations and does not extend to systemic or structural terms (Hill-Collins, 2009; Payne, 2004; Perry, 2011).

Elected and appointed school boards are local policymaking bodies that represent the needs and preferences of their local communities (Alsbury, 2008; McDonald, 2006; National School Boards Association [NSBA], 2014). They are charged with creating school district conditions that will enable students to meet high performance standards (NSBA, 2014). Unfortunately, public schools are not isolated domains of American society. They are a microcosm of the larger society, distorted and shaped by a-hundreds-of-years-old system of racial inequality, producing either misguided or well-intentioned government practices and policies. In a post-racial era where we are socialized that discussing anything within the context of race is taboo, these same practices and policies impose a colorblind ideology that stigmatizes and isolates Black students into categories of otherness (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Carter-Andrews, 2012; Hill-Collins, 2009).

Lacking in the public discourse regarding education policy is the intersection of power, race, student identity, school connectedness, and student outcomes (American Psychological Association [APA], 2012; Gaska, 2012; Hilliard, 2001; Okeke, Howard, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley, 2009; Kurtz-Costes & Rowley, 2009; Lipman, 1998; Murrell, 2009). The accepted and contradicting ideologies of colorblindness, embedded in multiculturalism, not only look beyond race, but, to the detriment of resolving issues of inequity, ignore institutional racism and its impact on Black students' schooling outcomes (Canen, 2010; Hill-Collins, 2009; Murrell, 2009; Rush, 2003; Son Holoien & Shelton, 2012; Tarca, 2005; Wells, 2014). This apparent display of cultural and racial tolerance serves the interest of the dominant power structure to avoid addressing difficult

racial, ethnic and gender issues of inequality, but leaves affected groups, Black students in this case, marginalized (Caraballo, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2004; Tarca, 2005; Wise, 2009).

Lacking conceptual tools to analyze it within contemporary institutions post *Brown*, colorblind racism has been difficult to challenge (Hill-Collins, 2009; Tarca, 2005; Wise, 2009). When there is not a common language to discuss the contemporary phenomenon of racism and its impact on the schooling experiences of a historically marginalized group of children, that weight becomes too heavy a burden to bear on the backs of these children. This becomes a critical constraint of the current educational policy and legal environment of color-blindness.

While acknowledging intersecting oppressions and political demands (Clarke, Hero, Sidney, Fraga, & Erlichson, 2006; Hill-Collins, 2009), the exclusion of other marginalized or ascriptive groups from this research does not minimize each group's unique needs and struggles as they navigate and seek the benefits of U.S. public schooling and its promises of economic, social and political upward mobility. However, there are fundamental questions about the way in which varying populations of students experience schooling in U.S. public K-12 schools, specifically Black students who experience persistent historical challenges to opportunity in schools that come short of what was promised through civil rights laws, national education reform and legal remedies from the U.S. courts (Ladson-billings, 2006).

In this study, the ethnic labels Black and African American are used interchangeably, but, primarily, Black is used to describe children of African descent. In the United States, the ethnic label of Black denotes native and immigrants of African

descent, although some researchers and immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean might make a different case (Okpalaoka, 2008; Rong & Brown, 2002). Nevertheless, U.S. public schools categorize students according to federal racial categories and make no distinction between the two groups. This study makes use of the United States Census Bureau's definition: "A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa (Rastogi, Johnson, Hoeffel, & Drewery, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

In this reform era of accountability, the apparent problem of practice in public K-12 schools is the inability of districts to eliminate historically racialized disparities in student access and outcomes (National Governors' Association, 2005). The area of school board governance lacks research that explicitly explores a district governance team's capacity to understand district-wide issues of equity relating to exclusionary practices (such as tracking, discipline and special education referral practices, relying solely on standardized test scores, and teacher recommendations and referrals to access advance coursework and academic extracurricular activities) and how they affect Black students' access and performance outcomes. The discourse on race, education policy and how local policy leaders make sense of the achievement disparities and outcomes for Black students remains silent within a socio-political, legal and policy framework of colorblindness and meritocracy (Baldwin, 2009; Bonilla-Silva, 2004; Howard, 2010; Lopez, 2004; Loury, 2002; No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2001; Perry, 2011; Wells, 2014). As a result, many district governance teams either miss or avoid an opportunity to address and affect obvious disparities regarding Black students due to current legal and policy frameworks of colorblindness and meritocracy.

Grounded in a historical and systems perspective, this critical inquiry sought to understand how school board policies and everyday practices and expectations are operationalized in a single PK-8 public school district and the effects these policies and practices have on the distribution of social rewards and outcomes for Black students. Specifically, how do local school boards, acting with the central office, manage diversity and influence the institutional habitus¹ of an organization and its responsiveness towards the needs of its Black student population? What are the shared meanings that affirm student identity and facilitate student connectivity?

Locally elected and appointed school board members are the guardians of local public schools. In the United States, there are nearly 15,000 public school boards, and local communities elect the majority of them (Land, 2002). Often receiving little to no pay and having varying levels of educational experience, these members, mostly volunteers, are entrusted with setting direction, aligning the system, ensuring accountability, and acting as advocates in the larger social and economic policy arena (Alsbury, 2008; Lands, 2002; NSBA, 2014). In accordance with state law and with the recommendation of professional educators, namely the superintendent, these officials make all legislative and fiscal oversight decisions for local public schools. If a local school board's primary responsibility is to set the course of the district and provide the necessary resources (California School Board Association [CSBA], 2013; Land, 2002; NSBA, 2014), then how does this phenomenon of racial disproportionality and access disparity happen under their watch? To what extent does this governance team

¹ The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu developed the term habitus that is described as a system of dispositions and habits that preserve social privileges across generations (cultural reproduction). It is a system of informal and formal norms, in other words, it is how things are done within a system (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

understand their democratic and legal responsibility for accountability within the context of equity or possess the will to do so? This study applied critical social research to discuss critical issues of race and equity necessary to address Black children's critical needs.

Research Purpose and Significance

Rorrer, Sklra, and Scheurich (2008) theorize a critical role for the school board, superintendent, central office and site principals as an organized collective of institutional actors. Using this theoretical term as the basis for their research, the authors posit that “an institutional actor influences the institution from within, particularly by influencing the development and implementation of solutions to identified problems (p. 335). Using the qualitative research design of critical ethnography, the purpose of this study was to explore and understand how a local school board, as part of this collective of institutional actors, understands, influences and responds to the phenomena of disproportionality and access disparity among its Black students within a socio-political and legal environment of colorblindness.

Black Students in California. The current data in California for Black students is alarming relative to their student peers (California Department of Education, 2013). A continuing issue of civil rights is the interplay of educational, political and socio-economic policies that affect Black students and their broader family units, as these types of inequities will continue to have a significant impact on their life outcomes (Davis, Kilburn & Schultz, 2009; Harris, 2010; Shah & Sato, 2012).

Status indicators. According to a report by the Campaign for College Opportunity (2013), “California is home to more Blacks than in southern states like

Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee while 37% (almost 800,000) of the state's Black population lives in Los Angeles County" (p. 4). In 2014, the California Department of Education (CDE) reports non-whites represent the majority of the state's student population (75%), and Black students represent less than 6% of the total population. The largest concentrations of Black student are located within the five largest counties: Sacramento, Alameda, Solano, Contra Costa, and San Francisco (CDE, 2013). Los Angeles has 10% of the K-12 population and the remaining third is scattered among the other 53 counties (The Ed Trust West, 2015, p. 4). According to a recent civil rights study focusing public school students in southern California, Black students attend "largely Latino neighborhood schools where they are a declining minority" (Orfield, Hawley & Kucsera, 2011, p. 2).

While making for such a small percentage, Black students, particularly Black male students, are over-represented among negative academic and socio-economic indicators of low academic achievement: suspensions, expulsions, special education referrals, high school dropouts, and foster care (Agosti, 2011; ETW, 2013; Littles, Bowers, & Gilmer, 2008; Losen, Martinez & Gillespie, 2012; Schott, 2012). In a recent report produced by the California Attorney General's office, while making up only 18% of preschool enrollment, Black students "account for over 40% of all preschool students suspended at least once" (p. 8). In 2013, only 34% of Black 3rd grade students scored proficient or higher on the California Standards Tests (Kidsdata, 2014). If reading proficiency is predictive of whether students will complete high school, what will be the schooling outcomes for the remaining two-thirds of this student group scoring below proficiency?

Relating to graduation rates and college readiness, as Black statewide graduation rates increase, they still fall behind those of Latino students (CDE, 2013). They have the lowest graduation rate and the second-lowest rates of completing the required college preparatory curriculum for the state's four-year universities (Campaign for College Opportunity, 2013, 2015). In 2014, the College Board reported that, of the 26% of Black students who graduated in 2013 and took an AP exam in high school, only 42% passed with a score of 3+. Comparatively, 35% graduating Latinos who took the test, and 61% of them passed with a score of 3+ or more.

Invisibility and stigmatized group identity. W.E.B. DuBois (1903) first introduced the idea of double consciousness to describe the psyche of Blacks living in a racial hierarchy where they internalized their identities based on society's view of them. The precepts of race are learned at an early age, as Black children are negatively problematized and marginalized throughout the K-12 system, yet they are almost invisible when it comes to the issues of equity and access to equal educational opportunity (Akom, 2008; Carter-Andrews, 2012; Hilliard, 2001; King, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 2008; Loury, 2002; Oakes, 1985; Noguera, 2008; Steele, 1997). In his book, *Race Matters* (1993/2001), Cornell West posits that using an ahistorical perspective in discussions of policy "contributes to the nihilistic threat within Black America" (p. 20). Nihilism within the context of Black American identity has to do with "the lived experience of coping with a life of horrifying meaninglessness, hopelessness, and (most important) lovelessness" (p. 20). Though Carter, (2005, 2007), Murrell (2009) and Perry, Steele and Hilliard (2003) would disagree, this meaningless and hopelessness is oftentimes attributed to the claims that devaluation of education is endemic to Black

American culture (McWhorter, 2000; Mocombe, 2011). This is a popular response from educators as the reasoning for Black students' poor academic achievement and low Black parent involvement.

However, while poverty does affect a significant percentage of this population, to aggregate them all within the low socio-economic student category would be to assume that all Black students are poor. Some of the pathological code words used to categorize Black students are low socioeconomic, urban, disadvantaged, and at-risk. These labels subsequently predestine this group of children as least likely to succeed. For both poor and middle-class parents of Black students, access disparity, racial isolation and exclusion and racial macroaggressions are major concerns (Carter-Andrews, 2012; Silicon Valley Community Foundation, 2010; Harry, Klingner, & Hart, 2005; Howard & Reynolds, 2008). Within high-achieving and middle-class affluent districts, a similar phenomenon of racial disparity exists (Barton & Coley, 2009; Education Trust, 2009; Howard & Reynolds, 2008; Kwabena-Nsiah, 2010; Noguera & Wing, 2006; Solomon, 2009). Curry-Stevens, Lopezrevorido & Peters (2013) argue that one of the intellectual barriers to eliminating racial disparity is the assumption that race is a proxy for poverty (p. 10). When we generalize and view every Black child as at-risk or of low socioeconomic status background, we pathologize them rather than viewing them from a strength-based lens, peeling back the layers, and altering practices and perspectives to provide each child with what they need.

As the Black student population decreases, courts continue to find race-based remedies to inequality in public schools unconstitutional (Bonilla-Sillva, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Patterson & Porter, 2012; Pollock, 2004). As more calls for colorblind or

race-neutral remedies increase, how do the needs of Black students keep from getting lost in policy discussions across the nation? The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction of Olympia, Washington, began the executive summary of its final report on the achievement gap between African American students and their peers with, “In today’s public schools, success for African Americans is too often elusive” (Washington State Commission on African American Affairs, 2013, p. 1). This is a telling example of the historical challenges schools face regarding improving Black students’ schooling experiences and outcomes.

Federal Educational Policy Framework

NCLB was intended to give states and local school districts unprecedented flexibility in the use of federal education funds in exchange for strong accountability for results among student groups that have historically underachieved in American public schools (NCLB, 2012). The legislation mandated annual assessments that required results and state progress objectives be broken out by poverty, race, ethnicity, disability, and limited English proficiency to ensure that no student demographic group was left behind. Instead, some argue that NCLB was just another sorting mechanism based on a system of meritocracy (Brown, 2009).

Wells (2014) exposes irony in the use of colorblindness in the current educational policy framework in terms of how racial inequality is ignored when implementing policies only to later “bemoan inequalities in educational outcomes” (p. 1). So far, the standards movement, market-based and accountability mechanisms have not explicitly addressed racial and ethnic inequities in schools or society at large. They all ultimately emphasize the shortcomings of the individual student and not the historical and current

socio-political contexts of exclusionary policies and practices. For instance, using standardized test scores to access advanced courses or to participate in academic extracurricular activities, when taken at face value, is based solely on meritocracy.

Significance of School Boards

Through recent research, the NSBA identified eight inter-related and essential action areas of effective boards: vision, standards, assessment, accountability, alignment, climate, collaboration and continuous improvement.

Looking at current student achievement data among Black students nationwide and research that responds to this phenomenon of their racialized experiences in schools, the role of school boards has not been a significant analytical focus in empirical research until recently. Specifically exploring how the interaction between local school board members and the central office within the constraints of state and federal policy influence student outcomes with an explicit focus on student equity. In this era of accountability and data analysis, how does a policy framework of colorblindness normalize failure among specific student populations?

In order to understand this question, a thorough system analysis should take place that might lead local policy makers and administrators to question and evaluate systemic structures of meritocracy and colorblindness to examine how these ideological frameworks create unequal outcomes for students of color, particularly within a policy framework that places much emphasis on standardized testing. The goal of this study was to contribute to the research on K-12 school board governance by sharing research in the educational and leadership domains of higher education, school board associations, and

local governance teams that acknowledge Black students' social experience of race and how it affects student identity and performance outcomes.

The findings from the various indices relating to the majority of Black students attending California public schools are significant. This study is a journey to explore and understand one district's response to the phenomenon of disproportionality and academic disparity among its Black student population through the actions of its local governance team under the requirements of NCLB and a state and federal ideological framework of colorblindness shaped by the American values of meritocracy and individualism.

Research Questions

This study sought to explore and understand the orientation of school boards, as part of a governance team, around issues of student equity and the team's responsiveness to Black students' needs. Two research questions guided this study:

1. How does the governance team monitor and manage student diversity and equity in the district?
 - a. What process or methods does the board use to understand the education related experiences and social emotional needs of its Black student population?
 - b. Is there a socially constructed consensus or shared knowledge among policymakers, staff, parents and community that affirm/ignore student identity, facilitate/inhibit student connectivity?
 - c. What effects do board policies and district practices have on the distribution of social rewards and outcomes for Black students?
2. How does the school board negotiate and manage external and internal influences/conflict that emerges as they attempt to de-legitimize the status quo?

Overview of Conceptual Framework

Using critical social research, I use Hill-Collin's (2009) domains-of-power framework as the lens through which to analyze colorblind racism and inequity from a systems perspective. Hill-Collins posits that, to understand the dynamics of racism, it

must be understood as a system of power (p. 44). She offers the domains of power framework as a new language of engagement for analyzing colorblind racism in contemporary society (p. 53).

In attempting to isolate the role of race in the treatment of Black students, one objective of this study was to explore and understand how the phenomenon of structural racism exist within the context of district policies and everyday district-wide and school practices. The second objective of the study was to explore and understand how a local school board understands and responds to the phenomenon of disproportionality and access disparity among its Black student population. In critical social research, the focus is on the fundamental nature of the phenomena (Harvey, 1990, 2011; Wainwright, 1997). In this study, the phenomenon is the issue of racialized student outcomes of disproportionality and access disparity among Black students relative to their peer groups.

Overview of Methodology

Though the unit of analysis in this study is the school board, I use Rorrer et al.'s (2008) construct of district as an *organized collective*, which consists of the school board, superintendent, the central office-level administration and principals (p. 311). I situate the board within this organized collective due to the limiting power of school boards as a policy actor rather than as an executive actor. While in California, and most states, school boards have the power to hire and fire the superintendent, set district direction, establish the structure and legislative policy to achieve its vision, align district resources, and evaluate outcomes, they do not have executive power of day-to-day management (CA Education Code §35160-§35178.4; CSBA, 2016). Thus, it is dependent on the office

of the superintendent and other administrative actors to operationalize directives throughout the district (CSBA, 2016; Lands, 2002; NSBA, 2014).

This critical research study is qualitative and used the combined traditions of critical ethnography and case study to explore how a local school board manages diversity, its policy orientation around Black students' needs and how board policy and decisions influence district practices around the issues of student equity over the school years 2006 through 2014 to affect this student demographic. Harvey (1990) found "critical ethnography is a particular approach to ethnography that attempts to link the detailed analysis of ethnography to wider social structures and systems of power relationships in order to get beneath the surface of oppressive structural relationships" (p, 9). This study took place within a PK-8 suburban public school district using observation, individual interviews and document analysis as methods of data collection. The data were collected from past and current school board members, central office and administrative staff and the district's African American Action Committee (AAAC), a formal community advisory to the district.

Definitions

Access disparity: Disparity is the condition of being unequal and refers to the difference in outcomes and conditions that exists among specific groups as compared to other groups due to unequal treatment or services (Department of Health & Human Services, 2011). Borrowing from healthcare research, the term *access* is associated with barriers and facilitators or gatekeepers (Bonito, Eicheldinger, & Lenfestey, 2005). Therefore, within the context of education policy, I use the term *access disparity*. This

relates to structures, institutional practices and policies that act as barriers and/or gatekeepers to high-quality learning opportunities.

Anti-racist: Refers to an individual or an organized group of individuals as an organization that understands the “institutional nature of racial matters and accepts that all actors in a racialized society are affected materially and ideologically by the racial structure” (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 15).

Ascriptive inequality: This construct refers to inequality across groups defined by some ascriptive characteristic, such as sex, race, or age (Reskin, 2003, p. 2).

Colorblindness: Rosenthal and Levy (2010), defines colorblindness as a de-emphasis on group categories such as race as one approach to eliminate intergroup relations and prejudice (p. 216).

Cultural Competency: A set of attitudes, skills, knowledge, and behaviors for working effectively across cultures in a way that acknowledges and appreciates people from culturally distinct groups (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2009).

Disproportionality: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (2007) identifies two separate sets of requirements to address disproportionality: disproportionate representation as a monitoring priority area and significant disproportionality ([20 U.S.C. 1416(a)(3)(C); 34 CFR §§300.173; 300.600(d)(3)] and [20 U.S.C. § 1418(d); 34 CFR §300.646(b)]). The federal definition of disproportionality is the over-representation of a particular race or cultural group in a program or system compared to their representation in the general population (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2011). Federal regulations define significant disproportionality when a “school district (Local Education Agency) has significant over-representation based on

race and ethnicity overall, by disability, by placement in particular educational settings, or by disciplinary actions” (20 U.S.C. 1416(a)(3)(C); [34 CFR §§300.173 and 300.600(d)(3)]). The U.S. Department of education has left the monitoring of disproportionality under the supervision of state departments of education [IDEA Code of Regulations, 20 U.S.C. § 1418(d); 34 CFR §300.646(b)].

Diversity: The Ontario Ministry of Children Youth and Services (2009) offers as a definition, “The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society” (p. 4).

Hegemony: A principle where the cultural values, beliefs and morals of an institution or organization favors the status quo or dominant group in power. This system of beliefs operates without force, becomes internalized and takes on the accepted notion of common sense, the ideal or common knowledge through socialization (Burke, 1995/2005, Cox; Madison, 2012).

Post racial: Denoting or relating to a period or society in which racial prejudice and discrimination no longer exist (Online Oxford Dictionary, 2014).

Racial Stress: Harrell (2000) defines racial stress as “Race-related transactions between individuals or groups and their environment that emerge from the dynamics of racism, and that are perceived to tax or exceed existing individual and collective resources or threaten well-being” (p. 44).

Racism: The beliefs, attitudes, institutional arrangements, and acts that tend to denigrate individuals or groups because of phenotypic characteristics or ethnic group affiliation (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999, p. 805).

Racism experience: An individual's exposure to perceived acts of discrimination as a function of one's racial difference (Stevenson & Arrington, 2009. p. 125).

Racialized social systems: Robert Miles is attributed to have used the term racialization in his book, *Racism* (1989). He posited that it "refer[s] to those instances where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities" (Miles, 1989, p. 75). Bonilla-Silva (1997) offered an alternating framework of racialized social systems and identified these systems in societies in which economic, political, social and ideological levels are partially structured by the placement of actors in racial categories or races" (p. 469).

Structures: The recurrent patterned arrangements, which influence or limit the choices and opportunities available (Barker, 2005).

Limitations

Key limitation of this case study is the issue of not being able to extend my time in the field and not being to expand the sample size to include student, parent and community voices beyond the AAAC. A shortcoming of many of the recent studies on student equity and district reform is limiting data collection to student achievement data and interviews with district staff, omitting student, parent and community voices regarding their experiences, interpretation and perception of district policies and related to Black students. Having the opportunity to provide a voice through counter storytelling can validate the experiences of those who feel marginalized (Delgado & Stefanic, 2011, p.43). For this reason, the district AAAC was included in this study. According to district local accountability plan, this group is a formal district advisory.

Delimitation

The decision to focus on district level actors is to explore the problem from a system level as opposed to a single school site initiative. While the issue of generalization to the larger context of this phenomenon might be questioned, I suggest that the findings from this study can contribute to the gaps in research by laying the groundwork for replication. Yin (2013) posits that case studies are preferred when “how” and “why” questions are asked (p. xxxi). Erickson (1986) argues, “That since the general lies in the particular, what we learn in a particular case can be transferred to similar situations. It is the reader, not the researcher, who determines what can apply to his or her context” (p. 153). As there are many moving parts at the district level (i.e., school board, superintendent, central office, site principals and district advisory councils), the understandings from this study are related to the need for identification and deconstruction of the structures and mechanisms that cause inequity and limit access for Black students specifically and all students in general.

Finally, there is the issue of subjectivity and the potential of bias regarding the researchers’ own participation as a school board member. Fong (2008) posits that “Subjectivity can benefit an analysis particularly when a researcher’s deep involvement with the topic of research offers insights others might not have” (Fong, 2008). To avoid invalidating the interpretations and findings from this research, I was alert and mindful of my own perspectives, positionality, assumptions, and how they can shape the research process.

Organization of the Dissertation

There are four remaining chapters in this study. The next chapter presents a review and critical synthesis of empirical literature according to relevant themes to justify how the study addresses a gap in this literature and discusses the conceptual frameworks that frame this study. Chapter Three describes the research methodology, setting, sample selection, data collection instruments, methods and data analysis. Chapter Four describes the results and finding. The final chapter discusses conclusions, implications and recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Many scholars argue that the current legal and educational policy frameworks of colorblindness, meritocracy and accountability within school districts promote inequity and otherness among Black students (Bonilla Silva, 2003,2006; Brown & Bartee, 2009; Hill-Collins, 2009; Ford & Grantan, 2003; Guinier & Torres, 2003; Hilliard, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Loury, 2005; Pollock, 2004, 2008; Schofield, 2004). This study focused on the problem of practice of school board governance teams' ability to explicitly influence institutional norms and practices that disrupt structured inequity in schools, which results in racialized disparities in access to opportunities and student outcomes. Numerous empirical studies explored issues of inequity relating to disproportionality and academic disparities among Black and Latino students through a focus on single actors such as teachers, site administrators and individual schools as units of analysis (Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004; Gay, 2010; Winter & Butzon, 2009). However, few studies focused on a district governance team's capacity to address student inequity at a systemic level within the combined legal and policy frameworks of colorblindness, meritocracy and accountability. This study sought to understand if and how a school board can influence a reorientation in a district's culture to disrupt institutionalized inequities.

This review of the literature examines empirical research on school boards and their capacity to create and influence the conditions for the district to improve student outcomes. The ideological framework of each study is highlighted along with how student inequity as addressed. Adding to this review is a discussion arguing the use of

Hill-Collins' (2009) domain-of-power framework as a conceptual lens to expose and analyze systemic colorblind racism in contemporary institutional domains.

School Board Influence on Student Inputs and Outcomes

There is a consensus among national and state school board associations and scholars that the key work of the school board in U.S. public schools is primarily to focus on policy that influences systemic practices and to evaluate the effectiveness of those policies (CSBA, 2014; McAdams, 2006; NSBA, 2014; Rorrer et al., 2008; Villareal, 2007). As the pendulum of school reform swings again towards local control, effective school governance has taken a front seat with the focus of study on building local school boards' capacity to effectively govern to achieve systemic outcomes. Though school boards have a distinct role in school reform, they have been understudied (Albury, 2008; Iowa Association of School Boards [IASB], 2001; LaMonte, Delagardelle, & Vander Zyl, 2007; Land, 2002; McAdams, 2006; Plecki, McCleery, & Knapp, 2006; Rorrer et al., 2008). There is very limited empirical research focusing on the local school board's capacity to be transformational throughout its system in collaboration with the superintendent and central office to advance equity and increase student achievement among diverse student populations, particularly Black students.

According to many current scholars of school boards, the NSBA, state school board associations and many state legislatures, school boards do not and should not perform executive functions. They are dependent on the superintendent, the central office and site principals for the day-to-day implementation and management of board policies through administrative regulations and procedures.

Furthermore, school boards operate as part of an extension of a much larger socio-political and historical context of public education and society itself. To study the school board in isolation of other interdependent actors would not enable researchers to support generalizations about board effectiveness and efficacy of a complex public system, addressing such complex issues as race and inequity.

Current literature highlights the impact of the relationship between the superintendent and the board of education on the quality of a district's educational program (Fusarelli & Petersen, 2002; Waters & Marzano, 2006). Many researchers cite the IASB's series of empirical studies on school boards as seminal and among the few qualitative and comprehensive studies which used student achievement as a measure of effectiveness (Alsbury, 2003, 2008; LaMonte et al., 2007; Land, 2002; Osborne, 2007; Rorrer et al., 2008). Since the publishing of the initial study in 2001 and two subsequent follow-up studies (IASB, 2000/2001/2007), there has been a growing body of literature on the creation of district-wide systems of accountability focusing on student achievement (Fullan, 2011; Orr, 2003) while only a few included student equity as a focus of district responsibility (Rorrer, 2002, 2006; Rorrer et al., 2008; Skrla, Scheurich, & Johnson, 2000). However, none of the studies on school boards and their influence on student outcomes, including the Lighthouse studies, explicitly addressed issues related to how schools reproduce inequity and or the ability of boards to disrupt or minimize inequity.

Iowa Association of School Board's (IASB) Lighthouse studies

The initial study conducted by the Lighthouse Research Project (IASB, 2000) was a multi-phase longitudinal multi-site case study conducted over a 3-year period to explore

school board/superintendent teams and their influence on student achievement, comparing differences between school boards in high- and low-achieving districts. In a paper presented at the 2001 annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, the research presenters cited the research goal was to use the results of the study to “Serve as a lighthouse to guide other school boards in their efforts to improve student achievement and to guide a state-level association in our efforts to help them do so” (IASB, 2001, p. 4). Because Iowa had not built a reliable statewide database to identify high- and low-achieving districts during the years 1995 and 1998, they had to use Georgia’s database of high- and low-achieving districts which were comparable both to each other and Iowa schools in terms of “enrollment, percent of children living in poverty, spending per student, household income and other factors” (p. 4). In addition, databases used to select the schools within the identified districts “ensured that differences between selected schools were not a product of demographic characteristics of the students” (p. 5). In all, a total of six districts were selected for the study, and 58 interviews were conducted with school board members, superintendents, central office, principals, assistant principals and teachers (p. 4). The study cited the literature on organizational change as the conceptual framework for the study. The key research question asked about the extent to which a healthy system of governance creates the conditions that foster productive change which, in turn, focuses “on the development of productive educational environments that result in healthy student learning” (p. 35). The lens used for the content analysis was based on seven conditions identified for productive change and renewal in schools:

- Emphasis on building a human organizational system
- Ability to create and sustain initiatives

- Supportive workplace for staff
- Staff development
- Support for school sites through data information
- Community involvement
- Integrated leadership (p. 7)

The extent to which knowledge and belief in these seven conditions were demonstrated by board/superintendent teams and the level to which these conditions existed within districts determined which districts were characterized as “stuck” or “moving.” For example, in moving districts, there were connections across the entire system, board members were characterized as having “high expectations for all students and they were able to articulate their focus on finding ways to reach all children” (p. 11). Stuck districts were characterized by deficit thinking: low expectations of students, attributing low student achievement to social and economic home conditions beyond their control. Board members were not knowledgeable of how their goals were implemented or about what the board member’s role was as it related to student instruction, and there was a disconnect throughout the system regarding the focus of the district (p. 11).

Using the content of the interviews for analysis, researchers used multiple informants, obtaining varying descriptions and perspectives of the district and how it was governed in terms of school programs, personnel relations, site generated governance and initiatives and how they connected to actions and initiatives of the board/superintendent team (p. 36). A shortcoming of this initial study was that there was no evidence on how the board influenced high or low achievement, and there was no discussion of the school boards’ discourse framework to address issues of student equity among historically marginalized demographic groups. However, the results showed some discussion that, among moving districts, there was “a relationship between the board’s understanding and

beliefs and their efforts to ensure that there were specific conditions within the system where a district-wide culture focused on improvement in student learning” (p. 14). The general argument of the study is that policymakers can create the conditions for a system-wide transformative change to take place in their districts “without micromanaging the system” (p. 59).

Since the initial study, two subsequent studies were conducted in 2002 and 2006. In 2002, the IASB conducted a study identified as Lighthouse II (IASB, 2014), which took place between 2002 and 2007 using the design of action research focusing on five school boards in Iowa. Delegardelle (2006), a key researcher in the IASB II study, focused on board members’ beliefs and the factors that influence them. She argued that building the governance capacity of local school boards should be a critical focus for improving student achievement (p. 160). According to the IASB, the overarching conclusion of all three studies is that the roles of the school board for improving student achievement include setting clear expectations, creating conditions for success, holding the system accountable to the expectations, building collective will, and learning together as a board team. After Lighthouse study III, La Monte and Delagardelle (2009), summarized the key linkages between school boards and student learning.

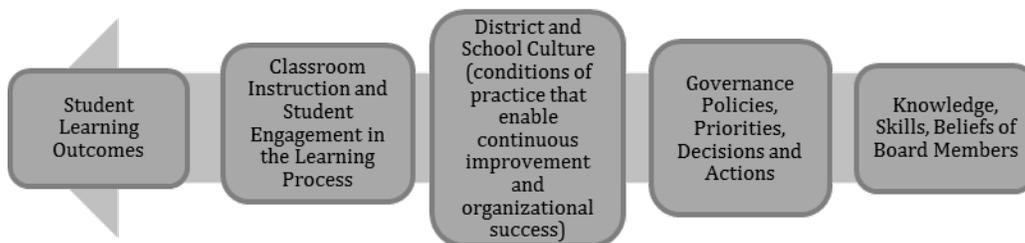


Figure 2.1. Key Linkages Between School Boards and Student Learning, Delagardelle (2009)

Clearly, these studies concluded that school boards, together with the superintendent, have a direct impact on creating the conditions for systemic

transformation. Unfortunately, these studies were conducted through an ahistorical and apolitical lens, separating student achievement from student equity as a focus of conditions that needed to be addressed by school boards. Johnson and LaSalle (2010) posit, “School systems are complex and built on layers and layers of beliefs and assumptions that are deeply rooted in historical legacies and perceptions about diverse groups of people” (p. 219). Also absent is how participating boards navigated competing demands of state and federal ideological policy frameworks, constituency groups, and the type of constraints or supports that facilitated district efforts to improve academic achievement and equity for all students.

Colorblindness

Ebert (2004) posits that the two main characteristics of colorblindness are a belief in American society’s presentation of equal opportunity for all, regardless of race, and that pervasive individual deficiencies account for the problems of entire social groups (p. 75). Ladson-Billings (2009a), argues, “Color-blindness masks a dysconscious racism” which is “a critical habit of mind that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given” (p. 35). This habit of mind of colorblind equality is the discourse and counter-movement to the civil rights movement that specifically shapes the policy framework in America’s legal, criminal justice, and public education system where much of the civil rights movement has had an impact (Bonilla-Silva, 2001, 2003; Brown et al., 2003). The premise to support such a discourse is that, because of civil rights gains and, more recently, the election of a bi-racial president, racism no longer poses the obstacles it did pre-Jim Crow and that categorizing by race is racist in itself and perpetuates division (Connerly, 2001, 2003; Steele, 2008). The supporters of such a

discourse argue that, if traditionally marginalized groups are still not able to advance in society, it is because they lack the initiative or are products of cultural dysfunction, which keeps them bound in a cycle of poverty and disconnected from mainstream society (Hernstein & Murray, 1994; Fenwick, 2013; Ryan, 2014; Unz, 2013).

Sense-Making About Race and Colorblindness

How do school leaders understand the perception of negative racialized school experiences from a student perspective? How might this have an impact on their ability to work successfully with African American students? Sensemaking is a process by which individuals frame and process information based on values, beliefs, assumptions and context (Evans, 2007a, 2007b; Spillane et al., 2002; Weick, 1995). Evans (2007a) conducted a qualitative study involving three suburban high schools that had a significant growth in their African American student population between 1990 and 2000 (p. 167). Evans argues, “The sense giving dimension of school leaders’ work reveals the words, actions, behaviors, and messages they send in an effort to make the environment sensible for themselves and others” (p. 168). In other words, this cognitive process can be influenced by organizational norms and the local context, which may create a space for institutional change or the perpetuation of the status quo, depending on how racial change and diversity are embraced.

The purpose of Evan’s (2007a) study was to attempt to understand how school leaders made sense of race and the demographic changes taking place in their districts over a period of time. The study analyzed data “from interviews, documents, archived data from a larger study which provided information on the programs, policies, and practices that schools modified in response to their growing African American

population” (p. 159). Principals and superintendents were interviewed with questions focusing on “race, diversity, changing demographic and data was analyzed looking at themes, patterns between schools and school leaders and relationships between the personal, professional, organizational and institutional contexts and of the leaders’ words, actions and messages” (p. 169).

A second lens of critical race theory was used to analyze interview data by interpreting the significance and meaning of the themes and their messages about race, how those messages were operationalized, and the implications for those meanings for students, the schools, and communities (p. 169). No school board members were part of the study. The study concluded that, when local leaders’ ideologies of race and diversity supported interpretations of racial contexts and were aligned and supported by the organizational culture they operated in, their willingness to challenge the status quo and social structures was influenced. Focusing on three high school campuses, the unit of analysis was limited to non-policy level organizational actors and failed to explore the collective influence of the school board and superintendent on the system as a whole. There lacked a systemic effort as each site was left on its own to address the impact of the demographic changes on campus that had an impact on the sustainability of reforms. Evan (2007a) summarized that the unintended and intended consequences of race denial created socio-political dynamic in each context, which dictated the extent to which school sites were able to be responsive to the needs of African American students.

Particularly absent in this study was discussion regarding board policy decisions addressing the academic and socio-emotional needs of Black students and understanding the complexities of the decision-making process within the socio-political contexts that

shaped their decisions. However, the study did conclude, “To address the needs of a racially diverse student population, school leaders must eschew colorblindness, “see” race, acknowledge the various sociopolitical manifestations of racism, and recognize their own (or a group’s) dominance and marginalization of others” (p. 184). This echoes Tarca’s (2005) argument that, without a framework or structure to guide discourse about race, the taboo of race becomes the dominant discourse (p. 108).

How Meritocracy and Accountability in A Colorblind and Deficit-Thinking Framework Reproduce Inequity

Systems of distinction and discrimination evolved in public schooling and continue to exacerbate and reproduce inequality, dramatically shaping the lives and opportunities of those they position (Gillies, 2005, p. 836). Public schools used these distinctions as gatekeepers to determine who gets in and who gets what. Meritocracy assumes that all individuals are equally positioned and can, therefore, be properly judged by the same measures, that individuals succeed or not due to their own abilities or lack of effort. This is the hallmark of American democracy.

In public schools, grades, standardized test scores and discipline records are used to allocate the rewards of public education and to weed out the undesirables. Ford and Grantham (2003) posit that groups geographically or psychologically outside the mainstream culture perform poorly on standardized tests which reward familiarity with cultural literacy and English proficiency (p. 52). In most schools, to access advanced coursework, specialized extracurricular activities, entrance is based on combinations of a merit/demerit system, grades, teacher recommendations and standardized test scores. An unintended consequence of NCLB was high stakes testing based on competitive

individualism in the same schooling environment of zero-tolerance policies based on “get tough” strategies. Both are seen as exclusionary practices and culprits which threaten the re-segregation of integrated or partially integrated school districts. These reforms, in essence, disproportionately affect the poor and students of color. The U.S. Human Rights Network Education Caucus (2008) cites these instances among others as evidence for the “large gaps in achievement and access, high rates of suspension, expulsion, and criminal sanctions, and low graduation rates for minority and English Language Learner students” (p.4).

Organizing Districts with a Systemic Focus on Equity

Senge (2006) argues that structures are the key interrelationships that influence behavior over time. In a study on districts as reform agents, Skrla, Scheurich, and Johnson (2000) conducted a study to understand how districts in four Texas school districts organized and operated to educate all students at high levels of academic success with a specific focus on student equity (p. 5). The data collection took place over a year and, during that time, school board members, superintendents, central office staff, principals, teachers, parents, community members and business leaders were interviewed. The findings were categorized into five major themes: state context of accountability for achievement and equity, local equity catalysts, ethical response of district leadership, district transformation and everyday equity.

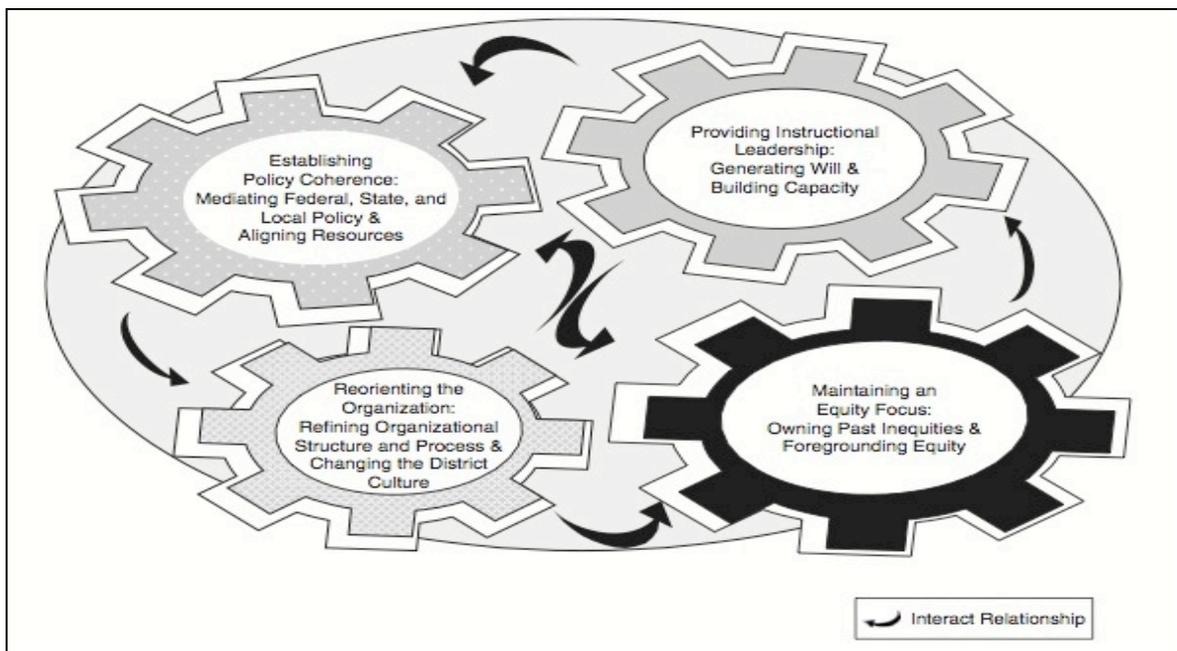
Texas had changed the context of education by transforming from accountability based on a deficit model to high expectations for all students regardless of race or socioeconomic status, change from input or process-driven schooling and educational accountability to results-driven educational accountability focused primarily on learning

and public access to disaggregated school and district performance data (p. 9). Local equity catalysts consisted of community activism, parent groups, federal desegregation orders, negative media attention and intervention from the State education agency.

The study differentiated and highlighted the four districts' responses to local catalytic events from other districts by breaking away from practices and ideologies that contributed to inequity. The study attributes the shift in paradigm to the "ethical response of district leadership (superintendents, board members, principals and teachers) to the state accountability system's performance data and local catalysts as an extremely important factor that lead to the district's success" (p. 14). This ethical response included accepting moral responsibility for student learning by not trying to explain away poor student performance, a willingness to go against the grain and the dominant discourse by believing that all students had capacity to learn at high levels, and acting on those beliefs (p. 34).

According to the findings, the school boards developed contextualized policy responses that ensured goals for student achievement were developed within an equitable learning environment, and then monitored progress towards achievement of those goals (p. 34). In addition, the findings suggested that the most dramatic change in the transformation of these four districts was that the experience had transformed the adults' beliefs and practices in that they had once felt powerless in addressing race and economic inequities within their districts. This study demonstrated a systemic response to student achievement and equity across multiple campuses, classrooms and the improvement of educational leadership, teacher performance and collective efficacy across entire districts.

Following that study, Rorrer et al. (2008), combining Constructivist and transformational paradigms, proposed a theory of districts as institutional actors in systemic reform with the focus of increasing achievement and advancing equity. Rorrer et al. used the term *district* to represent what they called “an organized collective” consisting of the school board, superintendent, central office and site principals (p. 333). The authors posit that districts engage in systemic reform aimed at improving achievement and advancing equity by way of four roles: “(a) providing instructional leadership, (b) reorienting the organization, (c) establishing policy coherence, and (d) maintaining equity focus” (p. 313).



Source: Rorrer, Sklra and Scheurich (2008)

Figure 2.2. Rorrer et al. Theory of District as Institutional Actor in Systemic Reform and advancing equity

Rorrer et al. (2008) argue that reorienting the organization involves changing the district culture (p. 318). The authors posit that, “Shifts in structures and processes needed to support systemic reform must be aligned with refined beliefs, expectations, and norms”

(p. 318). One example of shifts in structures is refining structures to support instruction. Local districts hold the power to make these shifts at the local level. Changing culture involves changing beliefs and values. In terms of managing a focus on equity, research showed that districts are also capable of eliminating institutionalized structures and practices that perpetuate inequity in student achievement (Rorrer, 2002; Skrla & Scheurich 2001). Rorrer (2006) posits, “districts that maintain an equity focus understand that a move toward equity is political, potentially contentious, and often riddled with conflict” (p. 330). Rorrer et al. (2008) cite foregrounding equity as an attribute in having a district focus. In foregrounding equity, the symbolic language moves to intentional policies operationalized systemically and embedded in decision-making and practices throughout the system (p. 330). In the maintenance of focus, districts need to be transparent where inequity exists and be responsive in a courageous, meaningful and culturally responsive manner.

Conclusion

School boards have the ultimate responsibility to fully understand their role in setting the overarching conditions within the district that will, in turn, determine whether students fail or succeed (Walser, 2009). In explaining how leverage is maximized in new ways of thinking, Senge (2006) posits, “We have the power to alter structures within which we are operating” (p. 44). School board members miss leveraging these opportunities when they do not understand how their decisions and actions affect system structures. The Lighthouse studies demonstrated that school board members and the superintendent are key actors in system-wide transformation of schools.

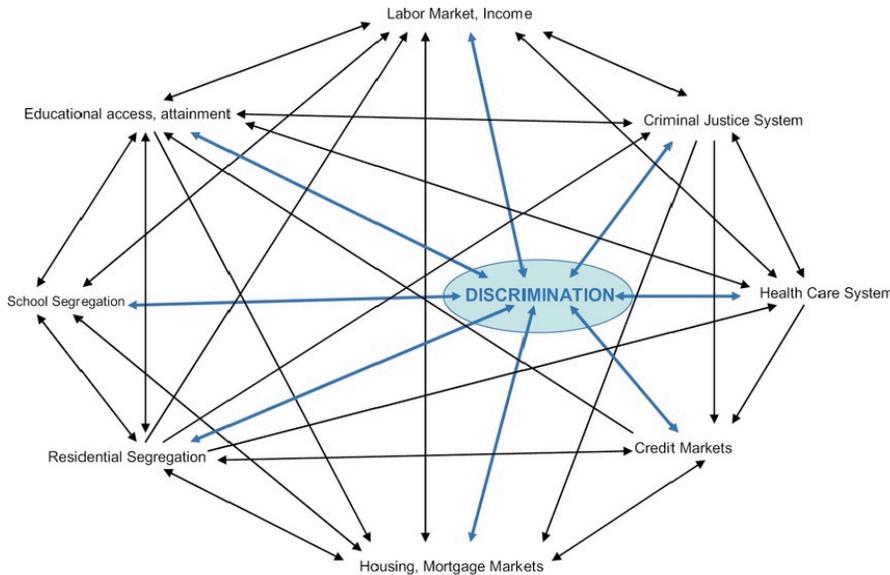
Rorrer et al. (2008) suggest that, in order to fully understand the potential of the theory of districts as actors in advancing systemic equity, “future research must be addressed and embedded in multiple, critical perspectives and broad methodological approaches” (p. 343). Rorrer et al.’s theory challenges schools boards to disrupt reproduction of societal inequality and be deliberate in their commitment to expanding equity to all students. The goal must be to challenge assumptions and focus on reframing the goal of governance to include equity that provides access to high quality education for all students regardless of their race, background or the neighborhood in which they live.

Conceptual Framework

Critical qualitative social research is concerned with interpreting human behaviors from the viewpoint of the participant experience. This study sought to explore and understand the cognitive aspects of district-level actors in making sense of the social construct of race, racism and disparate student outcomes relating to achievement and access for Black students in their district within a legal and policy framework of accountability and colorblindness. The issues of power, race, and politics run deep within American public school history. A macro-understanding of how institutions interact with society is essential in conducting this type of research because the evolution of public schooling and its reform is entangled within economic, socio-political and historical events.

I approach this research setting up context using Reskin’s (2012) assumptions about race discrimination. She argues that, in order to understand persistent racial disparities across domains such as healthcare, education, and employment, we have to acknowledge the interdependence or reciprocal causality across these domains which she

identifies as a race discrimination system (p. 18). Using a systems perspective, she defines a racial discrimination system as “A set of dynamical related subsystems or domains” (Figure 2.3).



Source: Reskin, 2012, pp. 17-35.

Figure 2.3. Reskins’ Racial Discrimination System

Reskin posits that this system of race discrimination “distorts our perceptions and warps how our culture views Blacks” (p. 31).

Reskin argues,

A society-wide system of race discrimination exists if three conditions are met if: race-linked disparities exist in every subsystem, at least some of these disparities result directly from discrimination, and disparities in each subsystem are reciprocally linked to disparities in other subsystems. (p. 20)

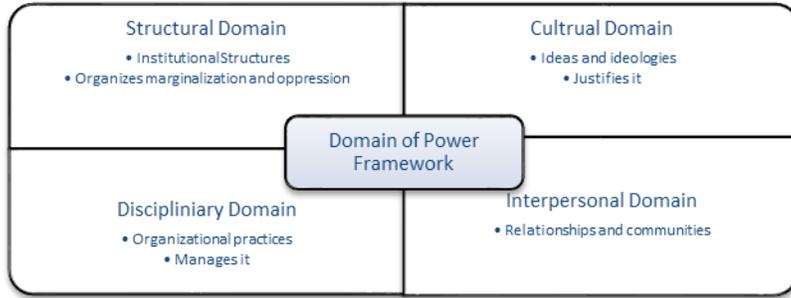
She also argued that it is possible to disrupt or minimize “feedback effects among its components (subsystems)” (p.24). Though she argues that a research focus explaining discrimination within a single domain misses the larger problem and admitted the limitations of her theory in developing solution, she offered possible strategies and interventions from a systems approach in transforming or weakening such a system. The

strategy relevant to public education was to increase accountability and to implement decision-making practices that minimized distortions (p. 31). For this reason, Hill-Collins' domains-of-power (DOP) framework serves to unpack colorblind racism as a way to provide school board members a tool to practice resistance and provide a language to transform and weaken this system of power.

Hill-Collins' Domains-of-Power Framework

To understand the socio-political dynamics that shape local school board members' decisions within the context of the institutional habitus of school districts and the larger community in which they exist, Hill-Collins (2009) suggests that "in addition to race, gender, ethnicity, class, religion, sexuality, ability, and age all have distinctive structures of power within their own individual histories" (p. 52). However, she also argues "racism is the most entrenched struggle for equality in America and all of these systems 'draw strength from one another'" (p. 53).

The DOP framework consists of four domains, which are "structural, disciplinary, cultural and interpersonal" (p. 53). Hill-Collins (2009) asserts that, within and across domains, racism is produced and resisted (p. 53). She suggests that, although any one domain might be more visible than others, depending on the context, in order for racism as a system of power to function, all four domains are equally necessary" (p. 54).



Source: Hill-Collins 2009, p. 53

Figure 2.4. Hill-Collins' Domains-of-Power Framework

Hill-Collins (2009) explains racism as a system of power set up in the structural domain in social institutions such as banks, police departments, school districts, and government agencies organized through practices “without anybody doing anything” (p. 53). It is self-perpetuating. In the disciplinary domain, “people use the rules and regulations of everyday life to uphold the racial hierarchy or to challenge it” (p. 53) in ways similar to the use of standardized scores to determine student placement. Here, she introduced the term “surveillance” to refer how people follow the rules. She describes the disciplinary domain is organized through bureaucracies that rely on practices of surveillance (p. 53).

In the cultural domain, ideas that justify the racial hierarchy are manufactured and colorblind ideology plays out the most. Hill-Collins (2009) also refers to this domain as the hegemonic or ideological domain (p. 201). This is the domain where dysconscious racism operates as a habit of mind in the form of stereotypes, racial bias and assumptions. Hill-Collins argues that the media plays a role in “constructing images, stories and ideas that reinforce racism as a system of power” (p. 53).

The fourth domain, the interpersonal domain of power, shapes everyday relationships between individuals “where they either accept or resist racial inequality in

their everyday lives” (p.54). This is the domain wherein many deny modern racism because their understanding of racism is limited to interpersonal terms and not structural ones (Payne, 2004, pg. 85) playing out through the ideology of colorblindness. The taboo of talking about race is also played out in this domain in that code words are used: *at risk*, *urban poor*, and *disadvantaged* (Bonilla-Silva, 2002, 2003; Hill-Collins, 2009; Tarca, 2005).

Hill-Collins (2009) suggests that several features should be considered when using the framework. First, if most people think that colorblind is a reality, the structural, cultural and disciplinary domains are not visible to them, resulting in their relying on the interpersonal domain to understand race and racism; secondly, individually and collectively, racism is produced and resisted within and across the domains of power (p. 55), similar to Reskin’s assumptions of system interdependence and feedback loops (2008). The third consideration is how each domain is an analytically distinct entity. Hill-Collins suggest we develop specific and contextual questions relating to how racism is structured and how it is or can be routinely resisted in that domain (p. 55). This is the area where this framework is used to analyze data gathered for this study. Finally, she suggests the complexity of the framework as the fourth consideration in that it is developed to liberate the discourse to a dichotomy of either/or, as all racism operates in all domains at all times and, at times, along with both oppression and resistance.

Chapter Summary

Because race is understood as interpersonal and non-structural, it is an uncomfortable social construct to discuss within the public discourse. Constructive boundaries for discourse and policy frameworks need to be created in districts and

schools in order to facilitate civil discourse about race, gender and power in a manner that allows policy makers, educators and communities to address inequities. In a speech before a conference audience of California school board members, Vern Billy, executive director of the California School Board Association said, “The accountability is yours. The students are yours; and you are now clearly the proverbial “them” that in the years ahead the public interest and education civil rights groups will be watching closely” (Billy, 2013).

Following this section, the proposed methodology for this study is introduced with a discussion on the following areas: research tradition, research setting, data sources and sample, data collection instruments and procedures, data analysis procedures, researcher roles, and the summary.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

The nature of this research consists of a single case study using critical ethnography as a research design. The purpose of this study was to explore one PK-8 public school district's understanding and response to the phenomena of disproportionality and academic disparity among its Black students. The underlying assumption is that this disparity occurred through the actions of the local governance team and central office under NCLB requirements, specifically between school years 2007 and 2014.

This federal legislation was intended to target issues of equity and eliminate disparities in achievement across ascriptive student groups within a policy and legal framework of accountability and colorblindness/race neutrality. In addition, this study sought to uncover the ways in which this collective understanding and organizational culture influence administrative and instructional practices targeting the academic performance and achievement of Black students.

In seeking to understand this phenomenon, this study asked two main and three sub research questions: (1) How does the governance team monitor and manage student diversity and equity in the district? (a) What process or methods does the board use to understand the education related experiences and social emotional needs of its Black student population? (b) Is there a socially constructed consensus or shared knowledge among policymakers, staff, parents and community that affirm/ignore student identity, facilitate/inhibit student connectivity? (c) What effects do board policies and district practices have on the distribution of social rewards and outcomes for Black students?

Finally, (2) how does the school board negotiate and manage external and internal Influences/conflict that emerges as they attempt to de-legitimize the status quo?

This chapter describes the study's research methodology and will include discussions on research design, research setting, research sample and data sources, data collection instruments and procedures, data collection and analysis procedures, researcher roles, and the summary.

Research Design

Critical ethnography explicitly assumes that cultures are positioned unequally in power relations and begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular lived domain (Madison, 2005). A case study is the best way to understand the historical and longitudinal actions of a single district in response to a phenomenon affecting a specific ascriptive group. Glense (2011) suggests that a case study allows a researcher to “focus on the complexity within a case, on its uniqueness, and its linkages to the social context of which it is a part” (p. 22). Looking at the influence of school board leadership within a systemic institutional leadership framework and its interdependence with the superintendent, central office and school site principals is one of the more complex entities operating within the socio-political environment of a local school district. Eisenhardt (1989) posits that case study research focuses on understanding the dynamics present within single settings. The decision to combine with critical ethnography was meant to assist in understanding the dynamics and context of district level actors' beliefs, processes for decision-making and actions regarding the achievement of Black students and their systemic influence on the district as a focus of their policy actions.

It is no secret that public schooling takes place in a highly complex and political environment. The decision to use this method was meant to learn from participants rather than study them. For this reason, the findings may be useful to the field of educational policy and leadership studies since there are few empirical studies focused on governing board members and their role in disrupting inequity within public schools. Thomas (1993) posits, “Critical ethnography is conventional ethnography with a political purpose” (p. 4). Madison (2012) argues that critical ethnography is about a researcher assuming personal and ethical responsibility to confront the status quo. In her description of critical ethnography, she posits,

The critical ethnographer also takes us beneath surface appearances, disrupts the status quo, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control. (p. 5)
[Need to finish the thought after this quote]

Using this approach exposes the intent to not just gain knowledge and understanding, but also to use the information garnered through this study to expand the discourse on accountability and the use of colorblindness or race neutral policies to manage diversity and address equity issues.

Research Setting and Context

Three recent descriptive studies (two published and one not published) looked at educational outcomes of Black students and how they were doing in K-12 public schools at the statewide, county and regional level (EdSource, 2012; EdTrust West; 2013; High Desert Alliance of Black School Educators [HDABSE], 2012). The findings identified improvements in educational outcomes in individual schools, but absent was evidence of systemic transformation focused on student equity.

When minority students from low socioeconomic status homes are compared to non-minority peers with the same income and amount of schooling, the disparity in reading performance narrows only slightly (Harmon, 2002). Taking a closer look at one of the studies (HDABSE, 2012), at many local districts in one region, Black student academic achievement, as measured by the Academic Performance index, was consistently below all other numerically significant ethnic student groups. The California department of Education (CDE) defines numerically significant as “100 or more students with valid Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program scores or 50 or more students with valid STAR Program scores who make up at least 15 percent of the total valid STAR Program scores” (CDE, 2011). These findings are disturbing and significant.

Sky View District is located on the West Coast, operates on a traditional schedule, and serves a student population in grades PK through 8. The district has an estimated 14,000 students in grades K-8 enrolled at one alternative education, one K-8, four middle, and thirteen elementary schools. It also has an estimated 800 preschool students. The community surrounding Sky View District has undergone rapid demographic changes, going from a mostly White working class community to having nearly half of the population made up of working class Hispanics and Blacks. Hispanic and Black students make up over 80% of the Sky View student population.

The ethnic breakdown of the majority of the district’s students is 50% Hispanic, 30% Black or African American, and 15% White. Over 75% of the students receive free or reduced-price lunch (Ed-Data, 2013). Also, 20% of the district’s students are English Language Learners.

The district’s Black student population was identified as having the second highest rate of suspension among African American students in the county at 27% (Edtrust, 2013; Fight Crime Invest in Kids, 2012). When analyzing district academic performance data over the last seven years, Black students perform below all significant peer groups with the exception of Special Education (Table 3.1), a phenomenon all too frequent in public schools (Lewis, Simon, Uzzell, Horwitz & Casserly, 2010; Schott, 2012, and White House Initiative, 2012). In 2013, the district achieved an academic performance index score of 725, representing a drop of 10 points from the previous school year (CDE, 2013). Overall, student achievement has been on a positive trajectory with a gain of 47 points between 2007 and 2013.

Table 3.1

Sky View Academic Performance Index Over Seven Years (CDE, 2014)

	Growth API of Black Students	Growth API of White Students	Diff	Growth API of Latino Students	Growth API of White Students	Diff	Growth API of ELL Students	Growth API of White Students	Diff
2013	667	801	134	730	801	71	708	801	93
2012	672	804	132	739	804	65	713	804	91
2011	648	793	145	723	793	70	699	793	94
2010	649	782	133	711	782	71	684	782	98
2009	641	772	131	703	772	69	674	772	98
2008	627	762	135	681	762	81	645	762	117
2007	613	752	139	670	752	82	629	752	123

Discipline and special education enrollment data. District suspensions and expulsions are disaggregated by ethnicity, student demographic groups and by disability (Appendices A and B). The CDE Data Reporting Office disaggregated student discipline data by connecting each of its 33 education code violations to federal offense categories (Table 3.2). In general, based on statewide data and current research, “willful defiance” is

the most often cited offense for suspension of African Americans (CDE, 2013, Edsource, 2012; Losen, Martinez, & Gillespie, 2012). The statewide data provides a count of students by district who were involved in one or more incidents² during the academic year and who were subsequently suspended or expelled³ from school as a result of the incident. The data show the most severe offense committed was a violation of California Education Code Section 48900(k), otherwise known as “Defiance.” Students involved in all other instances where the severe offense was something other than willful defiance were listed under “Other Reason for Suspension/Expulsion category as a contrast (CDE, 2013). Other Reason for Suspension/Expulsion is the federal offense category that corresponds with the following California Education Code sections (Table 3.2)

Table 3.2

CA Education Code Suspension and Expulsion Descriptions

California Education Code Section	Offense Description
48900(m)	Possession of an Imitation Firearm
48900(h)	Possession of Controlled Substance
48900(c)	Possession or Use of Tobacco Products
48900(k)	Disruption, Defiance
48900(f)	Property Damage
48915(a)(4)	Robbery or Extortion
48900(g)	Property Theft
48900(l)	Received Stolen Property

Source: CDE, Suspension and Expulsion Glossary, 2013

² According to CDE, an incident is defined as one or more students committing one or more offenses on the same date at the same time.

³ Expulsion counts include all expulsions; even those expulsions where the term of the expulsion has been shortened or the enforcement of the expulsion has been suspended.

As of January 2015, California law now eliminates the authority of school districts to issue both in-school and out-of-school suspensions to students in kindergarten through third grade for disruption or willful defiance. In addition, no student can be expelled for disruption or willful defiance. Districts now have to look at other alternatives for addressing student behavior than suspension and expulsions.

District Governance

The district governance teams consist of elected school board members and the superintendent and are supported by the central office and site principals.

School board. The school board consists of five individuals elected at-large. All members of the board have served on the board for the majority of this study's time period with the exception of one member only recently elected. Demographically, the board members are three White males and two White females. Among the four most seasoned board members, there is an average of 12 years of service on this board. Three out of the five members are educators. The remaining two have lengthy experience in small business administration in addition to lengthy experience working with local government and school boards as the nature of their profession.

Superintendent

Three superintendents have served the district over the last 10 years due to retirements. The current superintendent has served in the last two years. All three superintendents were promoted from within the district as longtime employees. In the 2014-2015 school year, there were an estimated 619 teachers, with an average in district tenure of 14 years and an average of 16 years in teaching. The gender of the teaching staff is primarily women (80%). Only 2% of the teachers are first-year teachers. The

ethnic make-up of the teaching staff consists of roughly 80% White (Non-Hispanic), .08% African American, and 12% Hispanic (CDE, 2015).

Central Office and School Site Principals

According to district documents, professional development is district focused but site specific, which allows for staff to focus on specific needs of their site while promoting the “coherence and fidelity to the district adopted core programs, beliefs and practices” (Sky View, 2013). According to the district website, the district framework for professional development focuses on good first instruction, response to intervention and professional learning communities.

Other Relevant District Actors

The district has an African American Action Committee (AAAC) that serves as a district level advisory consisting of parents, district staff and community members. This group meets three times per year. Its purpose and relationship to the district are not clear; however, the group acts in the capacity of facilitating engagement of African American parents and guardians at both the school and district level.

Data Source and Sampling

Data for this study was collected between mid-May and mid-November 2015 using analysis of over 50 district documents, 14 semi-structured interviews, and 2 observations of the district level AAAC meeting. The purposive sample consisted of 4 school board members and the superintendent as the executive officer of the district governance team, 4 central office administrators (COAs), 2 school site administrators (SSA) and 3 members of the AAAC, one parent and two individuals who were both district parents and also employed by the district as teachers. Three of the COAs

interviewed were active with the AAAC at various points during their tenure with the district as either a central office administrator or site school site administrator and two of the COAs functioned as a district level facilitator of the group.

The site was purposefully selected due to the continuous growth and concentration of its Black student population, and the district's low turnover among board members provides continuity in district leadership. A criterion sampling was used. Patton (2001) posits that criterion sampling involves selecting cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance (p. 238). In order to explore board members', superintendent's, central office staff's and principals' understanding and perceptions of the phenomena, the selection criteria were that it be a single school district with board members who have served for at least eight years due to the fact that NCLB has been federal most of that time. As every district decision ultimately leads to the school board, this sample should also be data rich. The assumption is that leadership stability will add to richness of the data, as the study sought a historical understanding of district actions and influence.

Rossman and Rallis (2012) speak of "establishing perspective." When selecting a sampling strategy, it is necessary that it fit the purpose of the study, the resources available, the question asked and the constraints faced (p. 48). This held true for sampling strategy as well as sample size.

Data Collection

The data collection procedures were document analysis, semi-structured face-to-face individual interviews and non-participant observations. Using a multiple data collection method strengthens analysis by triangulation of evidence (Eisenhardt, 2007, p.

533). In order to justify the site selection, document review facilitated the data collection strategies of interview question formulation and observation. Besides the general district performance data, websites, professional development and reports, I reviewed school board minutes specific to agenda items related to strategic planning, prioritizing and goal setting. Throughout the interview process, if a document was referenced during the interview, I followed up with requests to access them, or I obtained them myself from district, state and federal public websites. This process was important in order to corroborate information stated, and to explore how board policy and district practices were operationalized based on statutory mandates.

Instruments and Procedures

I entered the field towards the end of May 2015, and stayed in the field to collect data through the second week of November. Because I entered the field towards the end of the school semester, I was not able to access most of the participants until after they returned from the summer break. I used a matrix to align my research questions with the information I believed was needed to answer my questions with the methods I planned to use (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 106).

The first method used to collect data was document analysis, which consisted of the review and analysis of district-generated written, audio/visual, public documents relating to my research questions and against the governance teams' mission statement, core beliefs, budget, written descriptions of professional development both board members and staff participated in over the years in review, Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP) and strategic plan. The key purpose of this analysis was to triangulate the

data in order to verify whether what was stated in the documents was a reflection of data collected during interviews and observations.

Using questions that were open-ended, non-leading and probing, semi-structured interviews provided rich and descriptive information relating to the complex understandings of both an experienced and observed phenomenon from the perspective of district actors (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2012; Glesne, 2011). Transcription of interview data was outsourced using a strict protocol for the transcriber to follow in order to protect the confidentiality of the participants and data validity. All personally identifying information such as gender and names were redacted from each transcript and a numeric identifier was used to de-identify each transcript.

Member checking was also used for the transcribed interviews to ensure that I captured the essence of each of the participants' experiences as they intended. When reviewing the interview transcript, the participant was able to add or delete comments prior to their being included in the final reporting. Because I was working with such a small sample, I took additional care to protect the identities of the participants (Creswell, 2012, p. 402).

Data Analysis

I used the DOP framework (Hills-Collins, 2009) as the lens for data analysis, from the time I entered the field until data saturation and used each domain simultaneously. The road map for data analysis began with reviewing and exploring narratives and the big ideas as I collected raw data and prepared it for transcription. Initially, I used computer aided qualitative data analysis software to analyze the raw data from transcribed interviews and to conduct more in-depth analysis of documents

collected. I spent more time learning the program than analyzing data, and, after three months transitioned to manually coding and analyzing data. To avoid limiting or trying to fit all data into this DOP framework (Ryan, n.d.), I also used querying of text as a strategy to identify themes. This method assisted in facilitating comparisons and identifying repeated themes and relationships across data sources, so I could look deeper at what was happening in the background and among relationships that were being possibly being taken for granted. I used open, InVivo and value coding as my initial cycles of data-driven coding and then categorized or chunked the data until the three major themes emerged and were placed at different points of the DOP framework (Appendix E). In addition, I used social science queries, word repetition, key-words-in-context, and searching for missing information techniques to assist with identifying themes (Ryan & Bernard, nd.).

Three types or evolutions of coding were used. For the initial coding, open coding was used to label chunks or categories of data (Appendix F). From that type of data, I then used axial coding which is where I expected one of my open coding categories to dominate or emerge as a core or key phenomenon, leading to the, final, selective coding process where I developed the category relationships (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012, p. 33). The second, thematic, stage of analysis involved reading the text again and writing throughout the coding process. I went back and forth across all data samples simultaneously in search of constant case comparisons of similarities and differences among the cases. This was an exhausting and oftentimes overwhelming process.

I created and used a document summary form to assist with organizing and tracking document sources for my document review(Appendix C). The first instrument I

used to collect data was a review of digital, electronic or hard copy document relating to the research question (e.g., governance team's core beliefs, mission statement, Local Agency Education Plan (LCAP), budget priorities, strategic plan, school board meeting minutes, school site single plans, DELAC minutes, AAAC meeting minutes, web pages, and newspaper articles). This initial review of documents guided me in adjusting interview questions to verify or validate data collected through the document review. I referred to the documents throughout the data analysis process in order to triangulate both interview and observation data. Based on the conceptual framework, I assigned initial codes to the data throughout collection in order to maintain focus, keep track of data, and maintain organization.

As a researcher, I understood the need to maintain confidentiality, sensitivity to current issues or cultural expectations, and avoiding leading questions in interview instruments. Being a school board member myself, a community advocate, doctoral student and teacher, I was well read on the topic of systemic inequities and structural racism, and the cumulative impact on marginalized groups. I maintained mindfulness of how both my reflexivity and positionality could influence data analysis.

Role of the Researcher

Prior to entering the field, what I learned partially about my research topic, selected setting and participants, had filtered through the lens of my experiences as an elected school board member for over 11 years, a community advocate for more than 30 years, a special education teacher of 17 years, a parent, and, most importantly, my first-hand experience as a Black female student who participated in court-ordered desegregation from grades 8 to 11 during the early seventies in Los Angeles. Having had

to navigate a double consciousness (DuBois, 1903), I realize the acute implications that my positionality and embodiment can have on my study. However, there is a genuine scholarly curiosity to understand perspectives and assumptions outside of my own from those in decision-making positions at the district level as these relate to addressing Black children's complex and challenging schooling experiences within the current policy and socio-political environment. My general knowledge alone gathered from reading both scholarly and non-scholarly articles, viewing critical-theory-influenced narrations of researched and socio-politically themed documentaries, books, and my study of various levels of government data provoked a strong interest in disrupting the normalized practices of problemization and isolation of otherness directed toward African American children in public schools.

Tufford and Newman (2010) suggest the process of bracketing in order to distance a researcher from previously held preconceptions and theories so that bias during the design, collecting, analyzing and reporting of data minimize damage to the research process. The authors define bracketing as a method used in qualitative research to mitigate the potentially deleterious effects of preconceptions that may taint the research process (p. 2). I was aware I could have potentially disrupted the ongoing social and institutional relationships in the setting by not being mindful that participants may not distinguish the researcher from the school board member, community member, and member of the demographic of focus. As a researcher, I realized early on the potential effects emotions, knowledge and experiences would have on field relations and reflexivity.

Initially, I wanted to stay away from the topic because I felt that I was too emotionally close and would compromise credibility in this study. However, after reading Glense (2011), I learned there is “emotion work” or strategies I could use to my advantage “to inquire into my assumptions and to shape new questions by re-examining previous perspectives (p. 55). Using this strategy, I used my feelings and understanding to explore how this study may intersect with my personal journey as a school board member, directing me to a deeper level of reflection of my role as an actor in perpetuating this phenomenon. At the onset of the research process, while not ignoring my embodied factors and my positionality, it was important to enter the field by presenting this new dimension of myself to participants as open minded, curious and a collaborator interested in addressing a problem of shared practice.

Glesne (2011) posits that I bring all the multi-dimensions of who I am to this study and that I must account for them in my role as a researcher. All of who I am must be taken into consideration as I designed my methods, interacted with participants, interpreted data, made recommendations and developed concluding thoughts.

By incorporating reflexive and bracketing practices such as keeping a notebook, member checking and peer review, I accepted both the challenge and opportunity that my identity categories and positionality created for me. I approached this study as both a researcher and practitioner seeking to understand a shared experience in understanding this long-standing, chronic and complex problem of practice.

Summary

Through this study, I hope to contribute to education policy research and professional knowledge as it pertains to school board governance in K-12 public districts

through a systems perspective by identifying gaps in understanding related to improving educational access and equity for Black/African American students in public schools, validating the need to identify boundaries for local governance teams and educators to have critical and constructive conversations about race, and improving the practice, cultural proficiency and collective efficacy of local district governance teams and educational leaders by building systemic capacity to disrupt systemic equity.

Belfield and Levin (2007) challenged the American public: “If life chances depend so heavily on education, then it is important that educational inequalities be redressed in order to equalize opportunities in a democratic society” (p. 1). Ferguson (2007) argues that the central challenges for sustaining a national effort to build excellence in equity, is “developing and sustaining the collective will, skill, and discipline of adults to effectively prioritize learning by children, including other people’s children” (p. 251). Without this collective effort, the phrase “and justice for all” will never become a reality for too many of America’s citizens.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings from data collected in the field from mid-May to mid-November within a single PK-8 public school district, Sky View School District (SVSD). This study sought to explore and understand how a local school board, as part of an organized collective of district actors (includes the superintendent, COAs, and site principals), understands and responds to the phenomena of disproportionality and access disparity among its Black student population during the prime years of NCLB oversight and implementation, 2007 through 2014. This critical qualitative case study focused on the practices of a local school board in managing diversity and addressing the phenomena of racialized disparities in student outcomes, and the impact of minimizing the importance of race and cultural identity in understanding the schooling experiences of Black children.

The tenure of selected participant experiences and interactions, which included elected officials, COAs and SSAs, parent and staff AAAC members have been remarkably consistent over the last seven years (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1

Participant Roles and District Tenure

Participants District Role	Average Yrs. with District
Board Members	15.5
AAAC Participants (Non-Administrators)	9.3
School Site Administrators (SSA)	19
Central Office Administrators (COAs)	18.4

Note: The number of participants included, (4) board members, (2) site school administrators, (5) COAs (1) non-employee parent-AAAC), (2) teacher/parents-AAAC.

The continuity of participants' experience within the district was presumed to provide a rich and historical understanding of the district goals, challenges and efforts to address the phenomenon of focus.

A recent external force in the form of California's new Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and corresponding LCAP redirected SVSD and districts throughout the state to look inwardly at institutional structures and systems of instructional delivery with a focus on student equity.

Entering the Field

Upon entering the field, I found SVSD in the early stages of doing the work of self-reflection and exploring the research and practical applications of system transformation, grounded in equity, as a path for district reform. The board had just approved the new position of chief academic officer of student equity, access and outcomes and, soon afterwards, appointed an individual to assume that position from among its tenured and highly experienced district COA. There was consensus among interviewees that the district underserved Black students over the years. This research project was accepted by the board as an additional opportunity to facilitate the district's evaluative and reflective process in analyzing its response in meeting the needs of its African American students.

Based on participant interviews, observations and document analysis, common themes emerged from the data collected using the DOP framework (Hill-Collins, 2009) as a lens. Two key themes emerged. The first was structural misdirection influenced by ideological structures (i.e., colorblindness, meritocracy and deficit thinking and accountability), statutory mandates and processes (central office and site-level), and

individual beliefs/assumptions, which organized district actions, causing perpetuation of societal racial hierarchies; limited the capacity of the governance team and central office to address issues beyond the symptoms; and isolated Black students and the adults who attempted to advocate on their behalf. The second theme was the ways in which the board demonstrated political will as the district demonstrated resistance to racism by explicitly situating equity as a priority and focus of school board and district actions, and by initiating alignment and re-allocation of district resources to carry out board policies and actions.

This chapter organizes and reports the key findings by including the presentation of relevant narrative data and by answering the following research questions:

1. How does the governance team monitor and manage student diversity and equity in the district?
 - a. What process or methods does the board use to understand the education related experiences and social emotional needs of its Black student population?
 - b. Is there a socially constructed consensus or shared knowledge among policymakers, staff, parents and community that affirm/ignore student identity, facilitate/inhibit student connectivity?
 - c. What effects do board policies and district practices have on the distribution of social rewards and outcomes for Black students?
2. How does the school board negotiate and manage external and internal influences/conflict that emerges as they attempt to de-legitimize the status quo?

It is important to highlight that direct comments and quotes from interviews and observations are presented in a manner that preserves participant anonymity and overall confidentiality, thereby omitting identifiable markers, such as gender, to the extent

possible and using only the general categories of board member, COA, site admin and AAAC parent or staff participant.

Structural Misdirection Influenced by Ideological Structures, Statutory Mandates and Processes

I begin with defining ideological structures. Homer-Dixon et al. (2013) inform their understanding of ideology from complex systems theory and cognitive science which they argue, “emerge from the complex causal interaction of cognitive, affective, and social factors” (p. 343). Homer-Dixon et al. define ideology as systems of socially shared ideas, beliefs, and values used to understand, justify, or challenge a particular political, economic, or social order (p. 338). The authors also argue that ideologies are complex networks of concepts embedded in networks of people on both the individual and group level (p. 352). A key role of public education is socialization for work and citizenship. Public education is a highly complex, dynamic and political institution and not a domain isolated from the larger society or the dominant ideologies that guide its structures and processes.

In this study I defer to Peter Senge’s (2006) construct of structures in human systems where he posits, “In human systems, structures relate to how people make decisions... or the operating policies whereby perceptions, goals, rules, and norms are translated into actions” (p. 40). In public education, ideological structures such as hegemony, colorblindness, meritocracy (which emphasizes individualism, merit and privilege as a reward), cultural deficit, zero tolerance, accountability and standards-based performance, and achievement gap are examples of structures within public education

that shape policy and processes within schools mirroring the class and racial hierarchy of the larger society.

Valencia (2010) identifies the excessive focus on the achievement gap using high-stakes testing and standards instead of looking at root causes, such as obstacles within school systems as characteristics of structural misdirection (p. 152). He posits this misdirection as an example of contemporary deficit thinking. Much of the focus of this inquiry was during 2007 to 2014, the time of implementation of NCLB, which mandated states to ensure that districts and schools made adequate yearly progress and program improvement. Also in place during this period was the cornerstone of California's accountability program, the Academic Performance Index, which measures academic performance and growth of schools (CDE, 2015). These were the two primary frameworks districts and schools in California used to guide district practices, allocate resources, measure student proficiency in statewide curriculum standards, and monitor student program placement and participation in statewide assessments. Based on participant interviews and document review, since the implementation of NCLB, SVSD has been primarily using the state Academic Performance Index and the federal accountability system, Adequate Yearly Progress, as the means for measuring district progress on meeting its students' academic needs.

McAdams (2006) posits that a school board must have clarity on a theory of action for change, which will dictate the policy framework and guide the development and oversight of aligned reform policies (p. 15). Early during the interview process, board members and COAs were asked whether the district had in place a theory of action for change or policy framework specific to its student demographics and district needs to

guide their decision making in choosing one reform strategy over another. Besides acknowledging that none existed, which was the frequent response from both board members and COAs, there were many other different responses that provided insight into assessing the district capacity to address systemic issues beyond standardized test scores and discipline data.

According to the superintendent, there was no formal policy framework or theory of action for change through which the district analyzed data or actions outside of NCLB and the Academic Performance Index.

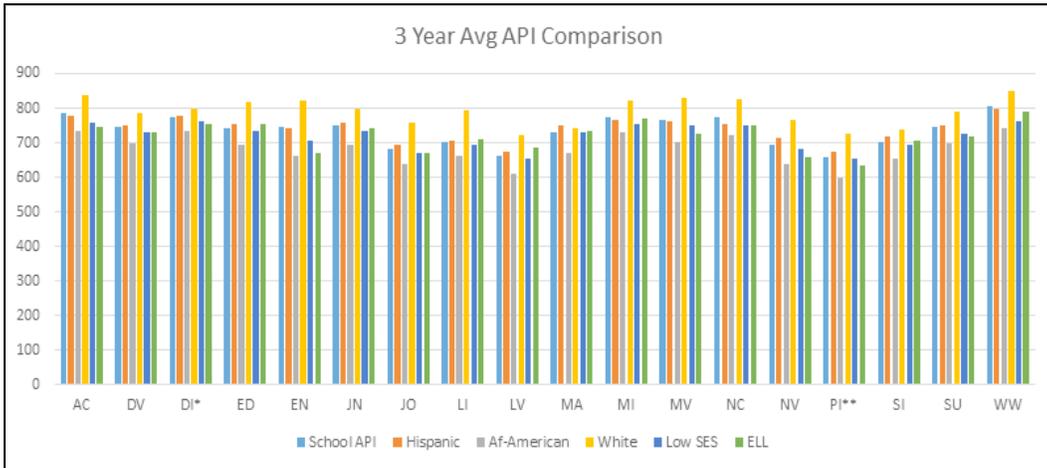
The superintendent stated,

For the governance team, I think it was primarily based on what the leadership team in the district brought to them. The leadership team typically focused on disaggregation of academic achievement scores or assessment scores. Sometimes, information was pulled in about special education that also incorporated it into the conversation. But there has never been until now (the new CA funding formula and accountability legislation), an intentional multilayer-scaffold approach. We've done things in isolation to address a specific thing or just kind of the latest and greatest... We did Sharroky Hollie, Ruby Payne, we did E Pluribus Unum... We had Randall Lindsey out quite some time ago. We've had LACOE [county office of education] come out and do some training. We've done things to address the culturally proficient continuum and engage in those conversations. But it's a onetime shot and it goes away.

SVSD efforts are examples of unsustainable and ineffective district reform efforts caused by piecemeal or isolated implementation. These efforts are not aligned or interconnected as systems of action and resource allocation is not driven by a core set of beliefs, commitments and comprehensive systems of data inquiry (CSBA, 2014; McAdams, 2006; Rorrer et al., 2008). SVSD board members and central office staff acknowledged that disproportionality came to the forefront of district actions in the last three school years, as a result of the district being identified by the state department of education as a demonstrating significant disproportionality among some of its student

demographic groups. The district was identified in a 2013 county-wide study as having the second highest African American student suspension rate, and the current legislative requirement is to explicitly measure proportionality and address this phenomenon among affected student groups.

According to the superintendent, the trend for academic achievement and narrowing of the performance gap between groups has been on a positive trajectory for all major peer groups (ELL and White, and Latino and White). However, the district’s African American student population, though demonstrating consistent overall improvement, show the lowest academic performance, marked by a significant difference in achievement as compared to the other student groups (Figure 4.2) and is disproportionality represented in Special Education (Table 4.2.b).



Source: Sky View School District (2015a)

Figure 4.2. SVSD 3 Year Average API Comparison

Table 4.2

Proportion of Students with Disabilities: Comparisons of AA and EL Learners

African-American students with disabilities in SVSD: 740 (42% of all students with IEPs)		
African-American students in SVSD: 4,301 (30%)		
English Language Learners with disabilities in SVSD: 290 (16% of all students with IEPs)		
English Language Learners in SVSD: 2696 (18%)		
Disability	% AA	% EL
Specific Learning Disability	47.5%	18%
Speech Language Impaired	36%	17%
Emotional Disturbance	55%	10.50%
Other Health Impaired	48%	8.50%
Intellectual Disability	40%	20%
Autism	40%	17%
Actions to address disproportionality:		
Workgroup on EL assessment, services, and dismissal criteria		
PLC for Resource teachers and School Psychologists for OHI and ED eligibility		
District monitoring of eligibility by ethnicity and disability		
PD for administrators and Gen Ed teachers on disproportionality planned		

Source: Sky View School District (2015b)

Skills, Knowledge, And Beliefs of Board Members Relative to Student Outcomes

Each school board member was asked whether they thought school board members could influence student outcomes. Two of the four members interviewed stressed the importance of having a superintendent and cabinet who are “like-minded with the district’s mission statement.” One member focused entirely on the use of data to guide decisions in alignment with the district’s mission statement, and another focused on the dynamic communication between board members, leveraging the experiences and backgrounds they bring, such as, “having a teacher on the board, having a business person on the board, having a non-profit person on the board gives a variety of perspectives of what a child needs to enter high school” (SVSD board member). When asked what theory of action for change or policy framework was used to guide the district’s efforts relating to student diversity and outcomes, a board member responded,

Personally, I can only speak for myself. I like research-based strategies. So, if there's something that is something new or something that's been around for a while that we have some kind of research that shows its being effective.

A former board member stated,

I think staff recommended it after they did the research. We trusted our people to put the data together based what our district mission or direction, basically, because we don't have the time to research all that stuff.

Another board member responded with

Our superintendent brings to us a choice of guidelines. She's done a lot of the homework and data research... we take some of those recommendations and hone in on the ones that seem to be a match for the issues and problems we have.

The fourth board member interviewed mentioned dealing with data on a daily basis as a person in the private sector and referenced an early conversation with another board member at a school board conference. This board member was told that "Educators are one of the few professions that is willing to pretty much live without data." Reflecting on that conversation, "Data was not looked at in as substantial way as it seems to be today." Furthermore, "So, if I was to narrow it down to a few words as to how we look at programs, show me some data." None of the board members had ever heard of theory of action for change or acknowledged that the board had in place a policy framework to justify, guide or monitor its actions outside of its mission statement or the federal and state statutory mandates between 2007 and 2014.

There was a consensus among school board members, central administrative staff and site principals that, during the years of inquiry, district policy and site-based practices were driven by categorical funding, achievement testing, and attendance, which was the basis for the district's revenue.

Managing and Monitoring Diversity and Equity

Management and monitoring of student diversity and equity within the district was compliance-driven and limited to meeting federal and state statutory requirements in terms of reporting the minimum for varying outcomes by student demographic groups. I asked board members if it was difficult for the governance team to discuss racial issues at the policy level when addressing the needs of its diverse student body. Two of the four board members' responses stood out most as they provided situational context around board will and capacity. One board member said it was not but admitted that these are tough conversations. The difficulty was more related to a lack of knowledge.

This board member stated,

We've opened ourselves up as much as we can in our own training. The [CSBA] Masters in Governance program, I gotta say, have not addressed it at all... you have to really look for it.

The second board member responded,

How about yes and no, [Laughter]. We've been hearing about this concept of courageous conversations. And I think, in certain contexts, we do do a good job, certainly better job than we did 10 years ago. But I think there's still a—and I don't know if it's sort of a sensitivity to say, I really don't wanna say that, and I think that can happen probably at every board meeting at one time or another. But, for the most part, I think we have done a better job of creating an environment where you can kind of express what you're thinking without too quickly being thought of as a non-thinker [Laughter].

Another theme emerged when asking the following question, "After we have the conversation, then what?" One COA shared that the district has had different initiatives in terms of professional development to build staff members' capacity and understanding in terms of issues of diversity and race "to sort of open their eyes to the different road that people are on." This individual stated, "What's difficult more than the conversation is, so, what do we do about it? ...I think we all struggle with, so, what does that mean, and how

do you give students more if they need more?” When I asked questions about how the district managed and monitored diversity and equity, I heard similar references to the challenges of “What to do about it?”

Tables 4.3a and 4.3b display the responses of three school board members and four COAs and SSAs when asked specifically how the district managed and monitored student diversity and equity in terms of its policies and practices between 2007 and 2014.

Table 4.3a

COAs’ Response: How District Managed and Monitored Diversity and Equity

<p>Central Office and Site Administrators (including superintendent)</p> <p>“There really has not been a particular focus, and resources have not been allocated in an equitable way... every school got this much money. With that money, make sure your kids succeed. That’s sort of how it was scattershot, with a broad paintbrush.”</p>
<p>“It wasn’t explicit as it is now. We’ve been looking at it from not necessarily an equity lens but it was the achievement gap. It was huge when we had CST scores that were so different for certain groups of students. We could say the predictability of well that group’s probably gonna be here, and that group is probably going to be here. NCLB had us looking at summative autopsy data.”</p>
<p>“Prior to LCFF there were categorical funds that were targeted for specific students. You might have funding for EL students and Title I students...you would have to use those funds to support student achievement for those groups of students.”</p>
<p>“I think even up to now, the issue of equity has been handled hit and miss. I think that there are specific site initiatives that try to advance cultural competence, and culturally responsive teaching, and address the equity questions. However, in the past, it was not a district-wide priority.”</p>

Table 4.3b

Board Members Response: How District Managed and Monitored Diversity and Equity

<p>Board Members</p> <p>“Well, categorical funding number one, whether its Title I, which, obviously, is one subgroup with lower socioeconomic. That was one way. A lot of it had to do, first of all, with student numbers and funding, how much that school would be given. So, really, there was a lot of focus on the categorical funding and just looking at how we could—how each school is given the amount they needed for their site programs.”</p>
<p>“I really don’t know how to answer that. I remember the reports showing, okay, here’s our API scores, and we’re here, but we have our subgroups that are here, and they need to go up 15 points, where everybody else needed to go up five, or whatever. I remember that a lot, and board members asking why is that always the problem, and figuring out how to address that. All the principals had to come and tell us their plan and they all had the same plan basically; but they all had to do it anyway. So when I think about, I don’t know if we were doing the right thing. I guess I don’t know if it changed much.”</p>
<p>“When NCLB came into the picture and particularly when the state API was developed, we saw that there were issues beneath that had to be looked at. They started generating a lot of the kinds of things, talking about some of these things that LCFF have forced us to talk about. It was done in a very informal and in some ways I don’t even know that we were doing it... A lot of it was happening at an informal level early on.”</p>

Table 4.3c

SSA’s Response: How The District Managed and Monitored Diversity and Equity

<p>“Well, how we managed equity tended to be based on ... We would have kids based on scores. I’d have to say a lot of it had to do with how they scored on state tests. And depending on how kids scored on state tests, and then also with the free and reduced lunch, things like that, those were things that kind of guided where we spent our monies.”</p>
<p>“I think even up to now the issue of equity has been handled hit and miss. I think that there are specific site initiatives that try to advance cultural competence, and culturally responsive teaching, and address the equity question, but it was not a district wide priority.”</p>

When asked specifically how racial and ethnic issues were addressed with teachers, administrators and support staff as it relates to instructional delivery and school climate, one board member responded,

I think we’re still getting there. I would say that we have not focused a great deal yet. We’ve been focusing on the learning methods and not on the racial and ethnic diversities. So, I would say that we’re still on that learning curve on that. [The superintendent] has helped a great deal. Our parent groups have helped us a great deal, but there’s so much more room yet.

Other board members cited specific trainings or guess speakers the district offered as professional development either at large or by school site such as Dr. Sharroky Hollie, Ruby Payne, Larry Bell or Cultural Relevance training. I asked one of the COAs to describe the issues or concerns related to student diversity, achievement and equity most often discussed over the last five years by the board, central office, and among principals relative to their position. After revisiting the issue of disproportionality among African American students in suspensions and English learners capping out at the intermediate level, this individual focused on what were thought to be the larger issues:

The deepest most significant issue, the root cause of this is what we need to get to. And, in some of the preliminary work there is a -- it's a valley-wide issue that is being reflected in SVSD, which is these are our kids and their families, this is who we are now. It isn't who they were 25 years ago. And we have a significant number of school district staff, both central office and teaching staff, who taught here 25 years ago, and they just don't like the way it is now. And that's the heart work and the heart changing work that we have gotta figure out. Because, until that changes, telling people you will do X, Y and Z works just fine, but if your heart is not in it, that's what kids are picking up on.

So, the engagement of our students who are English language learners, who are African American, who are in poverty, and because we're 82 percent poverty as a district, that's pretty much all of them. We need to build engagement. We want them to want to be at school and to feel respected. And I think that that's what we talk about more in executive cabinet now than we ever have.

Board members' responses corresponded with responses from COAs and SSAs in that none of these efforts were comprehensive or systemic.

During the 2013-2014 school year, SVSD introduced Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) and School-wide Information System to staff as a district-wide initiative to address academic achievement and school climate. The program was piloted initially only at some of the district's campuses, according to district personnel. One COA explained, "In this current school year, school sites are at varying

levels of implementation but all have implemented tier one, universal training.”

According to this individual, the implementation is not consistent across the district and they are at a stage of differentiation based on site needs. Full implementation of PBIS is expected to transition over 3 to 5 years. District leadership would like to be explicit about incorporating a culturally responsive component with PBIS and wanted to begin working with site principals but felt it would be too much too soon. According to the Chief Academic Officer, she was going to begin this task by working with the school site principals on the science of implicit bias. She said, “So we can stop feeling defensive and guilty about it. We all have them.”

Assessing the Level of Shared Knowledge and Meanings

Fullan (2016) argues, “social learning and shared meaning are at the center of school and system success” (p. 55). I wanted to explore the level of shared knowledge and meanings among the participants relating to the educational experiences of the different student groups within the district and the process for reaching consensus, particularly between the participants of the AAAC and the district. In other words, is everybody on the same page in terms of the value, what is being done, and why this work is important? I asked school board members, CAOs and SSAs to identify, within the last five years, the three most significant trends related to student outcomes within the district; to define diversity, equity and disproportionality; whether these constructs were measured in the district in the last five years and, if so, how often they were measured. For their initial responses, many of the participants cited difficulty in assessing student outcomes in the last three years due to the implementation of the new state standards and system of assessment (Smarter Balanced Assessment System) where test scores have not

been made available to districts. This is a frequent comment from many district officials in California where state and federal standardized test scores and accountability measures were the primary tool for assessing student outcomes relating to achievement. Reliance solely on external influences to gauge school and district progress is endemic of districts whose systems of data collection are developed mostly in response to compliance of regulatory mandates. The flip side is that the use of external data served the dual purpose of providing a standardized metric for comparisons across schools and districts. In defining the three constructs, diversity, equity and disproportionality, board members all gave similar definitions and examples specific to the context of their district. Most cited the differences between the constructs equality and equity (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4

Board Members Were Asked to Define These Three Constructs

Diversity	Equity	Disproportionality
It means not one group is overrepresented. There is a diverse population you have all races, ethnicities, religions, and everybody is represented and has an equal voice...I think is important.	Every group has equal access to programs, curriculum, anything our district has to offer.	When one certain group within the diversity of the population is overrepresented in some way.
I think diversity is the recognition that you do have students coming from hugely divergent backgrounds...I still think it's a pipe dream to think that schools, and they seem to be more and more expected to meet every need that's out there... that just dilutes the process of education.	Are you putting in the resources that are necessary to allow every student to achieve the most of their educational experience? ...It means equity of opportunity. Certainly giving every student an equal opportunity to succeed considering what his or her background is. That, to me, is really an important thing that the school district is accountable for doing.	To me, disproportionality means that you are either doing something knowingly or unknowingly as a district, which is not permitting a student or a group of students to succeed, and sometimes you see the disproportionality in data. I think that's one of the things that help flash—put a light on... Whether that's academic outcomes, behavioral outcomes, etc.

Table 4.4, Continued

<p>It's the cultural context in which we're raised...So, it's the context in which we think, but not necessarily the context in which the learning environment supports. I believe every child has a different frame of reference, a different experience and it's really up to use to build on our similarities and respect uniqueness.</p>	<p>Making sure that we allocate resources based on need and not just giving out equal portions because some students may need more.</p>	<p>In our expulsions, if we have 75% of our kids who are one particular ethnic group, we have to ask the question why? Especially if they only represent 20% of the total population, Why? What is it that we don't know? What is it that we're missing in our approach that might create the environment for the misbehavior?</p>
<p>... The population, how different our pupils are. We have a wide range of people that we're trying to educate.</p>	<p>Fair and equal, where not necessarily it's the same, but you might have to do more for one subgroup than you would for another. Some people have a problem with that, but I want all children to succeed not necessarily at the same level, but if somebody needs more help I'm willing to do that.</p>	<p>... We have some subgroups that just aren't coming up like the rest of—like the majority or another group.</p>

Assessing Capacity of Board and Central Office to Address Issues Beyond the Symptoms

SVSD included the African American student group as one of its areas of focus in its LCAP. Upon review and evaluation of the district's initial 14-15 LCAP, suspension and expulsion rates were significantly reduced for all students. However, suspension and expulsion rates continued to be disproportionately higher among Black students. Using this evaluative data, the district revised its actions in its revised July 2015 LCAP by increasing services for the 15-16 school year and creating the position of Chief Academic Officer, whose primary responsibility is to “Ensure that there are equitable systems and processes in place throughout the school district and will work and evaluate principals to increase student achievement and provide students who are identified by state and local needs” (SVSD, 2015c, p. 11). The revised LCAP noted that the district level AAAC provided input and wanted to address culture and disproportionality, including inclusion

of culturally responsive instructional practices (SVSD, 2015d, p. 10). The district responded by incorporating their input in the LCAP goals 2 and 3 titled culture and climate (Figure 4.5).

1. Academics	2. Culture	3. Climate	4. Engagement
Provide relevant, high quality classroom instruction and curriculum that promotes college and career readiness skills, with academic interventions and enrichments in place to eliminate barriers to student success.	End the predictability of academic achievement by ensuring that all systems and processes are equitable while being culturally and linguistically responsive to the needs of our students.	Ensure all school sites have safe, warm, welcoming, and responsive climates for staff, students and their families, so that all students feel connected and are motivated to attend and ready to learn.	Build positive relationships with families and community partners that center around the needs of students, inform our decisions, and strengthen our programs

Source: Sky View School District (2015d) LCAP Goals

Figure 4.5. Summary of Sky Views 2015-16 LCAP Goals

The superintendent described the direction of the district with this comment:

We’re implementing new [state] standards. So, making sure that we are being intentional about addressing equity and access issues on the front end of rolling out project-based learning and Common Core State Standards implementation and our expectations of that, so that we don’t implement and make the same mistakes that we made with the ‘97 standards, and then try to play catch-up after students have failed. We’re trying to be purposeful on the front end.

The superintendent also shared that the power of LCFF and LCAP was the expansion of other measures of education quality and performance beyond achievement:

It really does allow us to say there is an emphasis and an expectation and an accountability component for all of these other areas, as well as specifically bringing in language about equity. We have to now look at attendance... suspension/expulsion data... issues of equity. So, I think that is a huge piece that was not present before.

It really gives superintendents the leverage and the leeway to engage in conversations about these issues in a very different way than we’ve not been able to engage in them in the past. Because, in the past, it’s been what gets measured gets monitored. And that’s what was done... and it was always about the achievement gap, but there hasn’t been any mandate that says you will do X, Y, and Z. Even federal funds, they had the EL component, they have low socioeconomic component, you’re Title I, Special Education. But there’s never been language that says we have to look at equity for all students.

In the last two years, the district has put in place equity teams, which included district administrators, classified and certificated staff.

One COA stated,

We [equity team] realized over the last five years, and our board was very instrumental in helping to make all this happen as far as bringing in speakers, bringing in programs. We brought Larry Bell in and implemented the 12 Powerful Words. At the time we were doing it, I think it was what we needed to do. I think it was a good thing to do so I commend our board for doing that. But, as we look back over the years, it was almost like little shots here, a shot here. We did little shots instead of rolling it all together. Now, we realize we need something way more sustainable and systemic.

System Alignment and Coherence

Rorrer et al. (2008) situate policy coherence when “district leadership molds policies into district-specific derivatives, which represent an amalgam of external policy and internal goals and strategies” (p. 323). Aligning resources and mediating federal and state policies to address local needs while maintaining statutory compliance are examples of system alignment and policy coherence. The alignment of the district’s LCAP to its mission statement and strategic plan and single school site plans was mentioned frequently among school board members, COAs and SSAs. In its targeted communication to staff and the public, the district created a graphic to demonstrate how each initiative was tied to the long-term strategic plan and action focused LCAP. According to its revised LCAP for the current school year, “An alignment tool was developed and utilized to align LCAP goals and actions with SVSD priorities, District Strategic Plan, and individual site Single Plans for student achievement” (SVSD, 2015, p. 9).

One COA stated,

Everything is tied to the district’s mission and strategic plan; it’s a good working document. If it’s not tied to student achievement somehow through LCAP, which is tied to the strategic plan, we don’t do it. They are very closely aligned. In fact, the four goals in the strategic plan can be very easily quickly tied to our four goals in LCAP.

Figures 4.5 and 4.6 present the graphic organizers the district uses to demonstrate alignment and explain to stakeholders how these elements are operationalized throughout district programs.

PBIS — Positive Behavior Intervention Supports at all sites	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launches at every site • School focus area/slogan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location expectations • Positive rewards
School Counselors	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At middle and elementary schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with students and teachers
Parent & Community Involvement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Site Council (SSC) • English Learner Advisory Council (ELAC) • District English Learner Advisory Council (DELAC) • African American Action Committee (AAAC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom / Site Volunteer • Parent Teacher Association (PTA) • Parent Teacher Organization (PTO)
School Safety as a priority	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Safety Plans • Closed campuses • Campus supervisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L.A. Sheriff’s Department Resource Officers • Credentialed School Nurses
A Word About Attendance	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students who are present every school day experience increased success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing 10% or more of the school year for any reason
21st Century Learning Skills for ALL	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboration • Creativity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Critical Thinking

Source: SVSD (2015e).

Figure 4.6. How SVSD’s Mission Statement Will Be Operationalized in Current District Programs

Significant Board Actions Relating to Diversity, Equity and Disproportionality

During the interviews, I asked board members, COAs and SSAs about the most significant action the board took, in the last five years, to address the issues they identified relating to diversity, equity and disproportionality and its significance and impact on student outcomes. The majority agreed that hiring the current superintendent, an African American female, and creating the position of Chief Academic Officer of Equity and Access were the two most significant actions. One COA stated,

I will say that creating the new position is very significant -- it's something that's never been done before. And I think that the board took a little convincing, but their willingness to dedicate a person's time to addressing what we have not been able to correct for 25 years is significant... So, I think that that was a rather bold step. And there was some fear there, and what I heard from people that -- the feedback I got was, some of the board members said that that's gonna make us look like we've got a problem.

...And this district has been living with denial. And, so, I think this is a first step in an intervention that says the first thing you have to do is admit you have a problem. I think it was very difficult for this board to admit that there was a problem without placing blame on the victims. And, so, I would say that that decision that, yes, this is something significant enough that we have to make a difference is probably the biggest thing that they have done, to really focus on equity.

In April 2015, under the Human Resources consent calendar, the governing board approved the position of Chief Academic Officer of Student Equity, Access and Outcomes (CAOSEAO). According to the meeting minutes, the rationale listed for creating the position was to “Ensure equity and access for all students as well as to support site administrators in achieving the District’s mission” (SVSD, 2015f).

According to the position flyer, this position reports directly to the superintendent with the primary responsibility to “plan, organize and direct the activities ensuring equity for all students; to provide assistance, consultation and advice to the superintendent in matters relating to District operations regarding student achievement and equal access; to support site

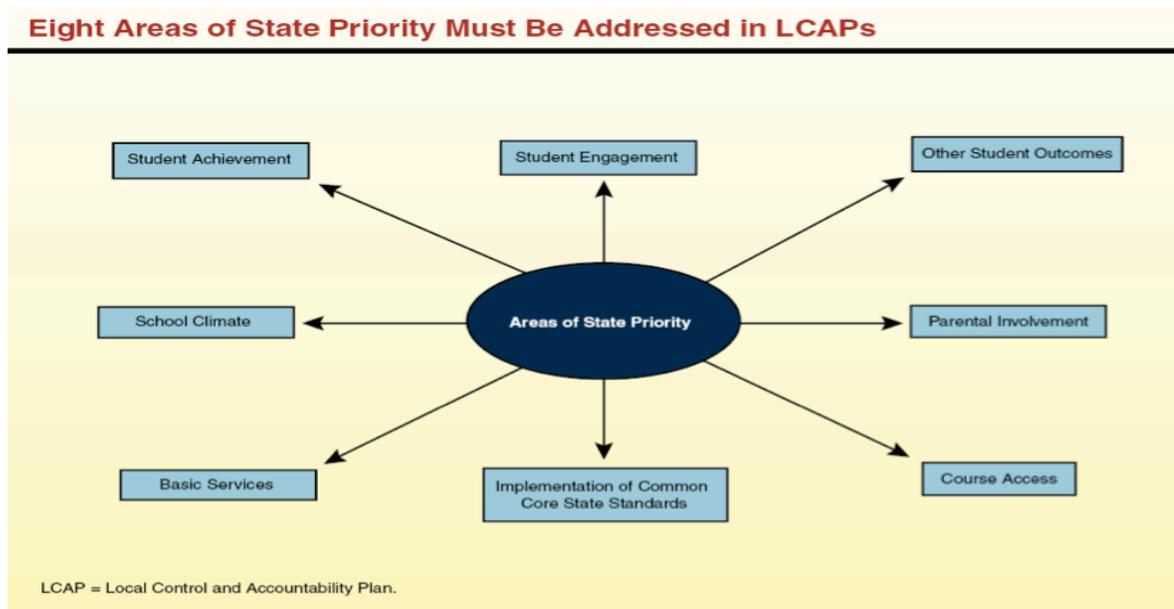
and district leaders in effective implementation of District initiatives” (SVSD, 2015g).

Another important observation one COA included in their evaluation of the board is their ability to understand the difference between equality and equity. One COA put it this way:

I think the most important action is their recognition that it’s not a one-size-fits-all plan...for a very long time, we were looking at giving equal everything. I think that some of philosophical shift has been very valuable for our board... I remember conversations initially where the board was really struggling with that. Because I get...they’re responsible for—and how they justify that we’re putting more resources in one place than another. And I think, so, that’s probably been the most significant shift.

Understanding how the governance team and central office navigated conflict, external and internal influences. The second research question centered on understanding how the school board negotiated and managed external and internal influences prior to LCFF, including to any conflict that emerged, as they attempted to de-legitimize the status quo. Based on participant comments, because Black students were categorized in either the Title I (low socioeconomic status) or special education category, they received a generalized response of district actions in addressing their needs. Many of the most recent initiatives on student equity were implemented in the year prior to this study. Due to my limited time in the field, I was not able to fully address this question. However, when asked how federal and state policy accountability affected the district’s ability to respond to the needs of Black students, central office staff saw state policy as having more of an impact on the district’s day-to-day ability to meet the needs of its Black student. The superintendent saw the new law as more explicit in “mandating that districts be held accountable for more than student achievement.” The superintendent was referencing the three specific categories that have to be addressed in the LCAP

(conditions of learning, pupil outcomes and engagement) which are divided into eight state priorities areas of the LCAP plan for K-12 as seen in Figure 4.7.



Source: CA Legislative Analyst's Office, (2013, p. 11)

Figure 4.7. Eight Areas of State Priority for LCAPs

The superintendent went on to say,

We have to look at issues in equity. So, I think that that is a huge piece that was not present before... And it really gives superintendents the leverage and the leeway to engage in conversations about these issues in a very different way than we've been able to engage in them in the past. Because, in the past, it's been what's measured -- what gets measured gets monitored. And that's what gets done. And in the past it's always been about the achievement and the achievement gap, but there hasn't been any mandate that says you will do X, Y and Z. Even federal funds, it's been okay. They had the EL component, they have low socioeconomic component, you're Title I --

But there's never been language that says we have to look at equity for all students. And I don't know what student groups that means for you district or you district, but each district has a responsibility to figure it out for their own district what that means and make sure all students are achieving at high levels.

A board member referred to the colorblind language coded in state policy. When asked the same question, the board member said,

One thing I think—not enough there either. Because you look at—if you say Black students, there’s not a—like with categorical funding, you say okay there’s Title I, and it looks to socioeconomics. Because I think again they are being politically correct in a sense to say, okay we’ll look at lower socioeconomic students. But not just say Black students. There’s assumptions, but they aren’t specific—even targeted funds. You say EL, but then people are assuming now, oh that’s Hispanic students. But there are also other students in there as well. So, not enough. I think that part of it needs to just say this is for African American students. Or this is—but then other people get upset and say, well what about—so I don’t know.

Another board member answered,

Budgets for sure. You don’t have a budget, they mandate you to do stuff, but they don’t give you the money. That was pretty frustrating. Okay, you need to bring up this subgroup, you need to do this, this and this. Okay, go ahead. And they don’t fund it. They don’t put the money where you can help that group necessarily. So, you have to try to figure out a way.

An SSA responded this way,

Tangentially. Title I that was before. And any form of money, state monies that would impact African Americans because they’re disproportionately a part of socioeconomically disadvantaged or foster youth, it would impact them in that fashion, but nothing explicit and directly.

Interviews revealed the level of trust among the board, superintendent and between the superintendent and the COAs. They were transparent about the conversations they were having around race and the status of African American students in the district; however, on two occasions, some participants noted that the conversations were not fluid beyond the central office. Once COA described a situation after returning from a workshop believed to possibly be good for the district, Beyond Diversity. The COA described the conversation on the way home:

We are not ready for it. We need to get there. And we’re probably going to send some people to that and build it slowly. But this district is not like Portland. We are not ready yet to embrace that open a discussion about race. So, because I think we have maybe ten people who are, but we have 4,000 employees, so—

One of the SSAs interviewed responded:

The conversation that at least I'm privy to in terms of that being addressed at the school board is limited, very, very occasional. And typically steeped in discussions about, well, I don't see color, we should treat all of our kids well, that kind of colorblind kind of approach to things. Which, for our school board, is actually just how informed they are about the issue or are willing to be informed about the issue, and sort of reflects political needs.

When asked how the teaching staff perceived the conversation on race, specifically relating to Black students' outcomes in the district, the administrator responded,

With degrees of acceptance, varying degrees of acceptance. I would say that the vast majority of our teachers are open to it. But the vast majority of our teachers haven't been apprised of it effectively, in my opinion. I would say there is a 3 to 5 percent recalcitrant group of teachers you're not gonna reach no matter what you say. Then, there's a group that on a subconscious unconscious level respond to students of color or students who are at risk in ways that they're not even aware of, but just need to be apprised of that. And, then, there is maybe a 10 percent group that understands the issue of equity, is very conscious of it, make instructional decisions based upon equity, understand the importance of relationships, understand the importance of high expectations for student success. So that's where we are. The encouraging part of that discussion is that group that's unconscious is a group that you can work with if you bring it to their level of consciousness.

According to COAs and site principals, most of the more courageous conversations are happening at the central office level. One COA discussed staff morale, particularly among the site principals and felt it appropriate under the circumstances to manage conflict by limiting the conversations or embedding them within familiar and non-threatening structures and conversations.

Isolation Among Black Students and the Adults Who Advocate on Their Behalf

One consistent theme across board member responses referenced the ongoing disproportionate number of African American students' suspensions and expulsions. Participants were specifically asked about the schooling experience of this student population over the last six years, particularly beyond discipline data. The range of responses, level of transparency and the process of self-reflection among participants

were interesting. One SSA captured the schooling experiences for a large number of these students this way:

Disproportionality in terms of number of suspensions, significantly lower number of students who are in the GATE [gifted and talented education] program, significantly lower number of students who are in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) academies, participation in scholastic extracurricular events significantly lower among African American students, attendance rates significantly lower for African American students, referrals to the district attorney for attendance issues higher for African American students, referrals to expulsions higher for African American students.

The question that generated this response asked participants to describe the schooling experiences of African American students as a subgroup relating to achievement, over and under-representation for the last five years in the district.

Current board member responses:

(Board member 1): I guess, again, other than point to suspension and expulsion kinds of numbers, I think that to reflect on the ability of a student to be in a classroom more frequently...and obviously that should impact their educational experience in a positive way. I think, overall as a district, it has improved at least nominally.

(Board member 2): I don't think we've really reviewed it racially. I really can't answer that.

(Board member 3): That's a great question. And I think not enough. A lot of what we end up getting brought to us as a board is the punitive stuff, the suspensions and expulsions. I'll be honest with you. I don't know off the top of my head what that experience is. And, from an academic standpoint, more needs to be done. I mean—now that you say that, it's hard for me to say it's good, and I'm glad that you asked me because I don't know. And that kind of upsets me right now.

(Board member 4): I knew some of the issues because of the trainings. I went to some of those trainings, and I was, like, shocked. Some of the stuff I had no idea. It's like, well, I didn't even think of it that way. It's like, wow. If everybody knew that, maybe we could do something different... a lot of people have no clue. I guess the frustrating thing is, as a board member, once we had teachers that refused to change. They'd complain to me all the time. It's like hello, if you wanna do what's best for kids, either retire or do it. To me it's like, you know, in a real world, you just fire that person. But you can't because they have tenure. And some of them are my friends. [Laughter] They were good teachers. But they

didn't—weren't willing to change... so that's one of the frustrating things to me. Let's face it, things change. You gotta go with it.

Three COAs also provided responses on this issue:

(COA 1): Well, based on the data I'm looking at, I would have to say it's not been as successful as other subgroups. So, it would seem as though our Black students are not connected. There's a higher rate of referrals and suspensions. There's not as high rates of achievement. So, I would say that that experience is not acceptable.

(COA 2): So, for the last five years of our data, and I just go back to the data, it is what it is, the data has shown that our African American students have been underserved by our district. They have not achieved at the level that many of our other student groups are achieving. Especially when you look at 5th graders with other 5th graders... They have not had even the level of improvement that many of other subgroups... like our English learners and some of our Special Ed.

(COA 3): Well, our African American students are the lowest performing subgroup. And that doesn't mean all African American students are lower performing. But as a subgroup that is absolutely true. And so it's not been good... I think that people have sort of evolved in their thinking... We had a mindset where I think many districts did, where we expected kids to come in and fit in the holes we've created. I'm not sure that we were as welcoming as we should have been... let me rephrase that, why am I being so political? We have not been as welcoming as we need to be for our diverse learners. I think, as a group, we like to think that we've got this sort of homogeneous group of students and we can teach them all and they'll all get it. And we know that there are a few that we will not reach. But I think we haven't been as welcoming to cultural differences, and we expect every kid to respond the same way and they don't. The question really begs, so what do we need to do so that we're welcoming and we create a climate that is safe and supportive for all?

I remember observing a level of mental dissonance on the face of this particular individual while answering this question. This individual went as far as to openly acknowledge the initial attempt at political correctness in their response and then openly acknowledged how districts in general, and this one in particular, had not created a welcoming environment but generalized its effect to its "diverse learners." Degruy (2005) posits, "The greater the difference between our actions and what we think about ourselves, the greater the cognitive dissonance and so, our discomfort" (DeGruy, 2005, p.

80). I focused on the use of the collective term “we” and “we as a group” and the statement, “We know that there are a few that we will not reach.” After this informant’s response, I reread the transcripts with a question in mind regarding the point at which, and using what criteria, a district, specifically a school, determines that a student is unreachable and whether this was just a societal assumption embedded within the collective thoughts and actions of individuals in educational institutions. Another COA’s response provided an even deeper example of self-reflection:

I think their school experience has been probably lovely and delightful in kindergarten and 1st grade, and pretty good 2nd and 3rd grade, and then starting at about 4th its—4th and 5th grade I think when we start to see the disproportionality really take off. . . we have a significant gap in achievement in math for our African American kids starting at about 4th grade. They have a pretty similar pattern to White kids going up through 3rd grade, and then it starts to flatten and, then, we get a reversal. So, we’re not addressing the needs of our kids by middle school for sure.

I think for our middle school, African American kids, the school experience has been pretty crappy as a general rule.

This individual went on to share an experience they had while a principal in the district,

I had a brilliant girl in my class. Her name was Kirby. And she—super high achiever right across the board—outspoken, wonderful, dynamic kid. And I pulled up her grades ’cause, one day, she had a D in science. And I thought, oh, that doesn’t even make sense. So she came in the room, and I talked to her privately. And I said, what’s the deal with the D? She said, “I hate him.” I said, what? You hate him, so you’re willing to have your GPA tank because—she says, “Yeah, he doesn’t respect me. I’m not gonna respect him.”

That was an eye opener for me. And I thought wow, it was probably one of the first aha moments when I realized that relationships were so powerful, especially for kids at that age. . . she did more than shut down. She was mouthy with him. All that dynamic personality she had turned into negative in his class and it was positive everywhere else. . . He had no interest in developing relationships with African American kids, and he was pretty open about it, so she picked up on it. So, it really showed me that the experience that our kids have in school is about relationships first.

The point was thoroughly understood. Since this individual had a relationship with the student, they were able to address her social and emotional needs rather than respond to stereotypical behaviors with a punitive response.

The last COA I interviewed focused on the time during their experience as a school site principal. Professional learning communities were developed to track school site data by student demographic groups. Though the data was predictable, what was not predictable for this individual was the staff response:

We knew our African American students were scoring the lowest. Even lower than their EL counterparts. It's disconcerting to say the least. So, we started tracking that, and I got called a racist for tracking only one subgroup—that I was trying to point them out. Teachers were very uncomfortable with it. I remember when we first launched it and I said, you know guys, it's racist not to do this.

This individual explained that, when teachers separated into smaller groups, the conversation went into cultural norms and bias, which, as the principal at that time, the respondent had not foreseen. For example, this individual stated,

And, so, what I used to call the elephant in the room would come out a lot. Things like, "Well, if they don't have a parent signature, I'm not gonna reach them. Because why should I reteach them and retest them and do all that work if the parents aren't gonna sign off and help them study." And I said, oh okay, so not only is this child not proficient, but, because they don't have a parent willing to sign, that's a double whammy on this kid?

Talking About Race

During the interviews, I asked all COAs and SSAs if it was difficult to discuss racial issues among district leadership and school site staff when discussing the needs of the district's diverse student body. One COA responded,

Among district office staff, if you're talking about executive cabinet, no, not anymore. It was hard at first, but it is now a topic of conversation. And it is a lens that's held to everything. Yesterday, or Tuesday, at cabinet, I got to bring that lens up again and again. And it's accepted, and it's fine. With site administrators, their mouths say that they want to talk about it, but their body language says something

else. So they're ready—the site administrators want to talk about it. But they're not comfortable with it yet.

Teachers association, I think that they will say, of course we wanna talk about it. But their actions say no, it's not our fault. So that's going to be a significant group that I need to be working with. Teaching staff I think it's very varied. I think that you have a quiet handful at every school site that would be happy and want to talk about it, and a vocal group that is preventing it from happening. So, I think that as you get—we're getting one group at a time. Executive cabinet, not a problem, we talk about it all the time. And we are saying, it's not just about poverty and it's not just about our kids coming from challenged homes. It is about race.

Another COA responded,

Well, I think we're just launching this whole implicit bias concept. And we're starting to do some deep work with trying to understand our organization's culture and our belief systems, whether they're fixed or not regarding our students of color. I do believe that our district's demographics in management has changed over the years to be a little more diverse. But, when you talk about diversity, we see it in our student population. We do not see it in our staff namely. We haven't over the years. And I think our district has taken a stronger stance on hiring staff of color as teachers and administrators.

An SSA responded,

I was probably one African American on the whole staff, and it was a new concept of thinking that African American students are not receiving the same types of services or that their discipline is in any way different, and it was met by a little bit of resistance. "No, that's not happening. No, that's not happening." And having to say, "Yes, it's happening." You're not saying it happened, but "yes, it's happening."

The SSA went on to say,

And so maybe at that time it might have been a little bit more difficult. But, right now, in our specific district, like I said, we have women who are African American, we have men who are African American, and we have a very diverse group of people in our district who are administrators... So it's just that we have that diversity, so it's easy to talk about it.

Another SSA replied, "It's a more difficult discussion from site to site." I then asked,

"Depending on?" The SSA responded,

That depends upon the comfort level of the administrator in terms of addressing those issues. It also depends at some levels the race of the administrator as they're

addressing those issues. The message [is] being received one way, if it's me having that discussion, What's [their] agenda? Versus someone who's White who may have that same discussion.

I pressed further and asked, "So you're saying it's more received...there's more credibility with a White administrator who is facilitating these types of discussions?"

This SSA responded,

If you were in your first year as a site principal, there would be more credibility coming from a White administrator. If you a Black administrator, you have a track record with folks [Whites/non-Blacks], and have developed relationships with folks, and then have that discussion with them, because of that relationship that's been built it's better received. [Being Black] I would have that discussion differently if I were a year one versus year three administrator.

I thought this was an interesting comment and thought about a growing body of research coming out of Critical Race and Black Feminist theory on identity politics and the issue of race in school leadership (Brown, 2012; Carter, 2013; Gooden, 2012; Mullen & Robertson, 2014). At the center of the discourse are the challenges and experiences of Black school administrators as they shift their identities to manage their leadership roles while navigating their workspaces.

I asked participants how the district assesses the patterns or distinct needs of Black students and what actions had been taken to address issues identified. One board member stated,

Well, again, I sound like a one trick pony here, but the fact that we have not had any really meaningful and don't expect to get an meaningful way to monitor academic success other than what the district generates itself.

Here again, solely relying on external academic data. Another board member responded in this manner:

I think one big challenge is the low number of Black teachers in our district, and administrators. I think that it's important to have—I mean we can do CRT [Culturally Responsive Teaching] all day long with a predominantly White

population of teachers. However, if those conversations don't also include everybody, I don't know how effective they truly are... 'Cause, sometimes, people don't always understand because they haven't had experience outside of their own population, that they're being offensive, or they're not truly understanding, or they don't understand the other perspective.

This board member mentioned two additional challenges: the community divide and the stigma towards predominately Black schools and the many ideologies and ways of thinking based on how people were brought up. The board member stated,

Our valley, in general, has put up a divide in our community. And so a certain school itself can have a stigma placed on 'em in people's head. And so they go, "Well, that is a predominantly Black school. Therefore, this, this, this"... I mean, it comes down to so many ideologies and guts that people—they were raised in a certain way. And people can say they have an open mind or that they're including everybody, but I don't know if they always are. Again, I think it comes down to having a more diverse staff, personally.

Another board member, when asked about challenges relating to access and/or student outcomes for Black students within the district responded, "All of our students have equal access." I, then, asked about student outcomes, and the member stated, "That's the area ... we're really focused on, proficiency testing. And I can't say that we've really looked at it in terms of African American student or racial breakdown." I then inquired if disaggregated data was examined. The member then replied, "It's been more based on academic—their academic successes or non-success." I don't use the word failure. I can't say that we've really looked at it a great deal." Another board member responded to the same questions:

Well, there are plenty of opportunities and efforts made to address the Black population. We have got groups. I've forgotten what the acronym stands for exactly, but we have a BBB, which I couldn't recall what that stands for, but it's basically Black parents, community, and, I think, also educators who are kind of trying to focus on that as a district group. And I think that's probably, to some extent, been the most effective effort we've found to try and address that issue of access.

The board member went on to say,

The biggest issue is just being able to connect with parents, and helping parents understand the need for expectations from their students in terms of how they conduct themselves in the classroom...

I then moved on to inquiring specifically about the schooling experiences of Black students within the district. This was one of two questions where all participant responses stood out the most during the interview process. The other question related to the AAAC and its purpose, which is discussed in another section of these findings.

Sky View's District Level African American Advisory Council

During my initial inquiry on this research topic more than two years ago, I remember seeing information about the district's AAAC and the specifics of its upcoming meetings posted prominently on its website. During that period of time, I set out to contact participants. One year later, the information was no longer on the website. Obtaining information about this group and accessing its members was an interesting task due to not having general information about the group outside of district staff and, particularly, because, when I obtained permission to enter the field, school was out for summer break. This resulted in the postponement of many interviews until the fall when school returned to session. This also shortened the timeline I had to complete this component of data collection.

I did a query search using the district's website engine to see if I could learn something relating to the level of involvement of this group within the district. I found only references to the AAAC relating to their input on the Local Education Area LCAP and a reference in the district's June 2015 newsletter identifying opportunities for parent and community involvement that listed the AAAC among other parent/community

groups such as school site council, parent-teacher organizations/associations, site and district English Language Advisory Councils (DLAC) and parent/site classroom volunteer (SVSD, 2015e, p. 3). I thought that, were I a Black parent or community member without access to those two documents mentioned, I would not know what opportunities were available to get involved relating to my interest in working with this student population. For the DLAC, I found the minutes for the 2014-15 school year and the meeting schedule for the 2015-16 school year on the district's website, but that was using a search skill most parents might not have. This meant that I had to go through district personnel to access AAAC participants.

What's in a Name?

As mentioned earlier in this section, responses relating to the AAAC were among those that stood out the most among interview participants in that the name and purpose of the group was not clear among district staff, the group's participants, or among the school board members. Even district documents had varying versions of the name of the group. Names most associated with the group are AAAC (SVSD 2015a, p. 3), African American Advisory Committee (AAAAC Meeting Agendas), African American Action Council (SVSD 2015c, p. 16), African American Advisory Committee (SVSD, 2015d, p. 10), African American Advisory Council (SVSD, 2015d, p. 8) and Triple AC (COA, personal communication). The reason attention is paid to understanding how this group is perceived in the district and how it identifies itself has to do with the issue of agency and efficacy of the group itself.

Sky View was unique in that, until recently, it was the only district in its region to sanction such a group. From the outside, as a member of the African American

community, seeing events sponsored by this group appeared quite progressive relative to other districts in the region. However, some of the participants of the AAAC saw their role as only symbolic in the district's scheme of school reform.

I wondered, given the tenure of the majority of the board and the district's focus on disproportionality of educational outcomes among Black students, why none of the board members were clear about the group's purpose, role, and or, for some, even its name. Participants, when asked about the AAAC's purpose or mission statement, were not sure of its formal or explicit role other than to facilitate parent and community engagement. When asked about the purpose and role the AAAC played as an advisory to the district, a former board member stated,

I wasn't on it, but I remember them meeting quite frequently and discussing different issues. Honestly, I don't remember what they were, though, to tell you the truth. I know they probably helped—they brought recommendation for probably policy, maybe speakers, maybe trainings. That's what I remember... Maybe, probably, ideas for principals, for discipline. I think they did all that. I can remember them presenting, but I don't remember what it was.

A current board member stated,

We get regular feedback from the Triple AC. And now that you say this, I was—it seemed to me at one point, we had a group that was an African American group that was called the Black something, something. That may be what it's morphed into. Maybe I'm misremembering that. But we do have regular feedback, certainly because that's an active group with regular feedback through Dr. Wilson [pseudonym for superintendent]. It's not only vocal, but very committed and involved with trying to bring not only new thought, but help to implement some of what that group believes needs to be done. So, as a practical manner, it's probably coming more through Dr. Wilson and sometimes its expressed as something that was discussed by the Triple AC.

I asked the same question of another current board member. I did not get a direct answer as to what the committee's specific purpose or the role it actually played as a district advisory group. This individual did respond in this manner:

I think that, when you just have a representative voice, whether it's the ELAC [English Language Advisory Committee], even a budget advisory, any advisory committee, is to say, in my opinion, what their role is, is to say this is what is happening, and then this is what we feel as a community should be taking place. Whether or not it's always acted upon is a question... I think an advisory committee would be to say to us, thank you for your intentions, but you're not getting it yet. So it's almost an educating body, if you will.

When I asked this same individual what input the AAAC provided relating to the disproportionality data, the response was, "I'll be completely honest with you. I don't know. I don't know if they're in that conversation, but they need to be for sure." COAs and SSAs were asked the same questions. One COA answered,

So, that committee was created largely because of the disproportionality. I don't think that is the right word—discrepancy in terms of student achievement for African American students. And we wanted to be able to have honest conversations with caring African American families, parents, community members, and say, we need input, what do we need to do about that? So that's how that committee sort of got started. It's evolved now where they put on parent education events. They provide support and direction. But, really, they can be the genesis of new ideas as well.

When asked whether they currently played any type of advisory role related to policy or district actions focused towards Black students, the response was,

No, I probably would say not that I'm aware of, and that doesn't mean they aren't, but not that I'm aware of... I think it's just the job of administrators to keep the school board informed and focused. I don't think there's any policy that stops us from doing the right work. If you have policy, it gives direction to the administration. If administration is doing that work, I don't know that you really need policy.

Though I understood the context of the statement, I thought to myself that all stakeholders should have the opportunity to inform the board directly with their concerns and not be simply filtered through school staff. However, it appears that the central office acts as a filter rather than a conduit for this group. I could not help but go back to my original question of understanding the nexus between the AAAC and the work that the

district does relating to improving Black students' outcomes for, both looking at its past actions and moving forward. I interviewed and asked the same question of another COA who had more interaction with the group during its early years. This individual stated,

We have site Triple ACs and then we have the district Triple AC, and they actually have developed their own mission statement. I don't know it verbatim, I should, but I just don't remember. But, basically, they are to provide support to the school sites and to the community to help increase African American student success in school. And I know for sure that they mention success, not just academic success, but their personal and professional success.

When I asked how long the group has had their mission statement, how long the group had been in place, and if a copy of the statement was available, the individual responded, "They have had their mission statement for probably three years," and "Oh gosh, longer than my eight, nine years... It's a strong group. They meet three times a year. They've hosted family nights; information nights where they had guest speakers come and share with parents."

From this particular interview, I sought to locate actual documentation identifying the group's mission statement and purpose while I attempted to obtain contact information through email from the central office personnel whom I thought was overseeing the group. Looking for a parent perspective, I initially requested participants who were not district employees. I received three names: a parent/community member, a staff person and that individual's spouse who was a school volunteer. As I scanned the list, I recognized one of the three people named. I had to immediately make a judgment call as to whether I would invite the parent/community member to participate in an interview. The research process requires continual self-reflection and negotiation of fieldwork dilemmas (Palmer, Fam, Smith, & Kilham, 2014). My multiple interactions and affiliations with the parent/community member were complex, and I was not sure

that my positionality would be a distraction in this particular case. For that reason, I decided it would be best not to include this individual in my initial contacts. Not having phone numbers for the other two, I made several unsuccessful attempts to initiate contact by way of email and social media, being sure to attach the letter provided by the district detailing the purpose of the study and allowing permission for me to conduct my study within the district. Not having much success, I reached out once more to the same COA and requested additional names, but, this time, without any preference as to who was referred, as the timeline for data collection was diminishing. I received three additional names with contact information. This time, they were all district employees. At that point, I decided that it was expedient to call the district office and find out when the next AAAC meeting would be held. There, I knew I would be able to solicit interview participants directly.

AAAC District Level Meetings: Whose Space is This?

Two district level AAAC meetings were observed. Attendance at the first meeting was meant simply to gain access to the group's participants. Attendance at the second was meant as an observation to gain a clearer understanding of the nexus among the advisory committee, the district, its policies and actions relating to Black students' outcomes. For both meetings, district central office staff created the agenda and facilitated the discussion focused on the issue of disproportionality and discussing the capacity and difficulty of some schools in developing site AAACs. Between meetings, some of this group's participants were interviewed to further explore their perceptions pertaining to how the district meets the needs of its Black student population.

I made it a point to attend the first meeting of the year for this group. I had not included observations as an instrument for data collection. However, since the opportunity presented itself, I thought to maximize the opportunity. I decided that, if asked to introduce myself, I would make known my role as a researcher and participate as an observer collecting data and not taking part in the discussions so as not to influence the flow of conversation. When I arrived, I realized I knew many of the participants, and, at this point, I had become a privileged observer because, in addition to being a researcher, I was known among some of the participants as founder of a local community organization focused on advocating on behalf of African American students, as a teacher in a neighboring district in addition to being a member of the another neighboring district's school board. In addition, one-third of the participants in the room were members of the same sorority I pledged as a college student. Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner and McCormack-Steinmetz (2003), define a privileged observer as "Someone who is known and trusted and given easy access to information about the context" (p. 45). It was an unspoken expectation among the central office staff and board that, by having easy access to information about the context, my role would be solely that of an objective researcher. Like Sultana (2007), it took much self-discipline to be reflexive and "faithful to the relations in that space and time" (p. 378) and to be present as an observant and objective researcher. Therefore, I maintained a discursive distance close enough to observe the process and dynamic of the room but distant enough to not become a distraction or obstacle to the flow of conversation.

After the initial greeting, the meeting facilitator from the central office asked us to be seated. This individual oversaw all the district parent advisories. A key observation

that immediately stood out was that district employees outnumbered parents and community members. Not including myself, there were 15 individuals in attendance. Out of the 15, there were two non-employee single parents (male and female). The single female parent had two children who had previously matriculated through the district and she currently had one elementary student attending within the district. The individual who represented a local community organization had a previous engagement and only stayed long enough to introduce himself. He had no children attending district schools. However, he did inform the group that he would like to continue his involvement for the new school year. I took it that he was involved at some point in the previous school year. The other male in the room was a single parent of a middle school male student, and also facilitated the annual Knowledge Bowl in partnership with SVSD, a jeopardy-like game where students compete citing facts about historical and current African American individuals' achievements. This was the same individual I had identified as my fieldwork dilemma. I later learned, during the introductions, that he was one of the more active members of this committee and served as the group's secretary and keeper of the minutes. The remaining participants were COAs (two White females), SSAs (two Black female assistant principals), and seven Black female teachers.

Facilitating the meeting was a COA who was already in the room when everyone came in. The people arriving seemed familiar with each other. The tone was relaxed. Once everyone greeted each other, the COA sent the sign-in sheet around and asked everyone to find their name tents and place in front of them. The agenda for the meeting was passed around. The COA introduced herself and gave background on the work that has been done by the AAAC in the past year. She asked each person to introduce

themselves, their role in the district and what they expected to see from the AAAC. A first-grade teacher said her main concern is that Black students are not recognized for their accomplishments at the schools because everything is focused on academics and, although many of these kids make progress, they seem to be ignored because they are in the low-performing groups. A middle school teacher introduced herself as one of the original members and said her school site is planning to implement a site AAAC. A third-grade teacher who was accompanied by her primary grade daughter said, “My little boys don’t always get equal and fair treatment. It starts in Kinder. I see it all the time in Kinder with the heavy discipline.”

The second COA then introduced herself and her new title as the chief academic officer for student equity, access and outcomes. She explained that two primary outcomes of her position were to improve equitable practices for all subgroups and work with principals to support them. She said her goal in the next couple of months was to build strong equity teams at each school site, including among students. The two central office personnel proceeded to bring the group up to speed with the actions of the district over the brief summer break. The primary facilitator stated, “Last year, there were a couple of meetings where we scratched the surface and discussed what were some of the practices we are seeing at the sites.” As I observed some individuals nod in affirmation, I wondered what she meant by that comment. I made a note in my journal to ask her when I interviewed with her. The meeting’s focus was more on providing district information and laying out the agenda for the AAAC. It was reported that four schools had established site AAACs. One COA stated that the district is defining disproportionality by what is happening with African American students and that the AAAC lens is really

on African American students and looking at results. The COA who was facilitating the group also added,

We also know there is disproportionality in equity for African American students. Do they have access to STEM, AVID, electives? If they're in special education, does this preclude them from participating? Our work at the table is focusing suspensions and expulsions and looking at district implementation of PBIS at sites.

I thought to myself, after saying all that about over and under-representation, why did she just reduce the group's role to just looking at suspensions and expulsions? Members were encouraged to attend the larger district leadership meetings such as LCAP and district site leadership team (DSL T), and to encourage other African American parents to attend and participate in those district-level meetings.

District as Driver of AAAC

After that initial meeting, I met the COA who had been facilitating the group for four years. This individual agreed to be interviewed and, during our time, the first question I asked was about defining the mission and purpose of the AAAC. The COA stated, "The purpose is to really look at equity and access in our district, for, namely, our African American subgroup, and to really look at disproportionality as a—we're really highlighting behavior in that group." I then asked about the group's role in the district. The response was, "Well it's been a role that we have gone over the LCAP goals with them and reviewed with them." I clarified my question and asked what role it played in the past prior to LCAP because I understood the group had been around the last seven years:

I would say an ancillary role that I might even venture to say perfunctory, like compliance-driven, and people dotting I's and crossing T's, and not—I don't wanna make a judgment 'cause I didn't run it four years ago. But I would just say

that it didn't have the impact that it probably could have had... I don't even think we've scratched the surface on what we can do.

I mentioned the comment made in the meeting referencing deep conversations during the AAAC meetings where they "scratched the surface." I what was meant by that:

Well it's really difficult to jump into a heavy conversation in the course of an hour. And, most of the time in those meetings, you're giving them information that they have to have because you have compliance issues. But it's really hard to just have everybody sign in and, now, let's really jump into racism and equity and disproportionality in our district. So, by the time you get through the information and you go around the table, it's really tough in 20 minutes left over to get to any kind of level of depth that we need to get at.

Our secondary goal was to put site-level AAACs, so that we're really engaging in this work in a more intimate setting at the site level, to engage parents and looking at the needs of their students at their school, too. And then we have our college, career readiness, district family night platform that one, belongs to AAAC. And that's one of the lasting effects of AAAC that we've had over the course of four years.

I understood that the district AAAC only met three times a year. I needed clarification and asked what was meant by a district family night platform:

I really want this year for them to really develop a platform there, in which one of our AAACs—they're afraid to speak at those. But I really wanna encourage them to be able to get up there and talk about the vision and mission of AAAC and then some motivational something that they wanna talk about to the parents. But coming from another parent, two parents, I think would be powerful.

The participant described some of the group's conversations centered on book studies and trainings. One particular experience was salient:

We did a book study. One of the books was this one [She holds up Delpit (2012), *Multiplication is for White People*]. So, at those meetings, the conversation got very heavy. And they did it in a room of 200 people. So, I'm like, well, I guess you don't need to have a small setting. But, for me, being a Caucasian person, I think it's just—I look around the table and it's all African American people. And I think, how are they gonna think that I even have an awareness of the journey historically, what they're really facing. Or am I just a figurehead for the district to dot an I and cross a T. Those thoughts go through my mind as I'm talking because I want it to be real. And when we went to these trainings, it was real. And I think,

from those trainings, we launched our college, career, family night. But I don't think we've made a dent in student outcomes.

I asked if any of the parents participating in the trainings were in attendance at the meeting I attended. While identifying individuals and praising one of the individuals who spoke that night, there came a comment I thought was very candid in assessing her limitations to moving the group to its potential. Referencing one individual in particular, the COA noted,

She has words of brilliance on occasion. And I've seen her command an audience. And, so, I kind of love where she's coming from, from being community minded. And I just think the power for what we have to do isn't gonna come from an administrative viewpoint. I think it's gotta come organically from parents to parents and us working together.

I asked about the challenge was for this group? Was it more on the district side in terms of how its structured and facilitated? Or is there something else? The response centered on parent involvement:

That's where I was going with that. Parent involvement across the district, across sites, is low. We're learning that we're not just giving parents information and having them sign school plans, but they actually have to be engaged in a consultation-type process and really asking questions and getting viewpoints... I will say DLACs [district English language advisory councils] are even worse as far as sitting and listening to an administrator talk about those stats or the data and all of that. And then getting a very small amount of input and that's it.

African American Parent Involvement

Parent involvement was a major concern across the district, particularly with the AAAC, yet no specific data related to African American parent's concerns addressing barriers related to greater participation has been collected up to the time I entered and exited the field. The Parent Information section of the 15-16 Student Handbook states,

The Superintendent or designee will:

Conduct, with involvement of parents/guardians, an annual evaluation of the content and effectiveness of the parent involvement policy in improving the academic quality of the school served by Title I.

The Superintendent or designee will:

Ensure that the evaluation include the identification of barriers to greater participation in parent involvement activities, with particular attention of parents/guardians who are economically disadvantaged, are disabled, have limited English proficiency, have limited literacy, or are of any racial or ethnic minority background. (Sky View Student Handbook, p. 27, 2015)

Regarding evaluations in general relating to parent involvement, no data was available outside of the aggregated data from the general LCAP survey administered to the two parent groups to measure school connectedness. One COA responded this way:

We've done surveys with the parents. But it wasn't—and we did it particular with Triple AC. But I don't know that it addressed especially African Americans. I think, if I remember the survey correctly, it was your connectedness with the school...your experience with the school. Your experiences with your child's acceptance at school. So, we gave that Triple AC the survey. We gave DELAC the survey. So we actually did it in different parent groups and then put it all together.

The same COA stated,

Really what we're trying to do at our site triple ACs is get parents, just get parents involved. Because we're having a very difficult time. The sites are expressing, not all of them, but many of them expressing that they'll have a Triple AC meeting and they'll have 15, 20 parents in the room. And then the next meeting they'll have two. And maybe two parents who didn't even come to the first one. And then the next meeting.

So there again isn't that accountability of you belonging to DELAC, and you're reading the bylaws, and signing bylaws, and you are the president, whatever. We haven't gotten to that level with our triple ACs.

I then asked, "But yet this group of parents haven't been surveyed to find out what it is that they want or to identify what are the obstacles, some of the things you would send out to the ELAC." The response mentioned work left to be done:

That's an area that we really have to work on. And it's unfortunate, it shouldn't be that... I know we do it for ELAC because we have to, because we know there's a report that's going in to the state, and we know that it's tied to getting funding. And it's unfortunate that because that isn't the same for Triple AC, that we don't have the same urgency. So yeah, something we really need to work on.

Providing a Parent Counter Narrative

After attending the first AAAC meeting, I pulled three individuals aside to request an interview. One of the parents interviewed, which I will identify as Parent A, had a masters degree and worked for a public agency for over 20 years. Parent A had one daughter in college who had already matriculated through the system from K-8, and a primary school student currently attending. Two other participants interviewed which I identify as Teacher/Parent B and Teacher/Parent C, both were district teachers and parents of students attending Sky View schools.

Parent A Voice

This parent spoke about experiences with both children at the school sites, personal perceptions and interactions with the district, the site and district level AAAC. Parent A volunteered with the parent teacher organization (PTO) at his/her children's school and had served one year on the school site council but had to stop because of personal work schedule. Most experiences with the district were focused around discipline. For example, "From the disciplinary aspects, both of my children were disciplined through there and they both tried to get my children to be tested." I asked, "Tested for what?" The response was "They wanted to give both of them IEPs and they wanted to have them tested for ADHD."

I then asked for the reasons provided:

Because they said that they were -- well for my daughter in 7th grade, they had a meeting with two of her teachers and they pulled out her records all the way back

from 1st grade, where the 1st grade teacher said she runs around and talks a lot and is very active or animated. They were saying that every year she's been really talkative, and I don't know. So when she got to 7th grade they said that they think it may be a problem and perhaps she should be tested. And then I refused to have her tested.

The daughter's grades were "great" but "lower than what they should have been." After having a very serious talk with her, she no longer exhibited those behaviors. I then asked if the school had contacted the family beforehand the push for referral to special education. The parent went on to explain:

Not really, because one thing is, I am the type of a parent that I've always had been able to be contacted if there were a problem. And I've always let teachers know at the beginning of the year, if you have a problem feel free to contact me. It just seemed to me that when teachers did call me, it was after something major had happened, not before. To try to be proactive, they were more reactive. And they always seemed to expect me to be defensive. I don't know, that's the -- that's just the opinion I had. They looked at me like I was some angry uneducated--

Parent A went on to explain the way staff dealt with him/her until a conversation happened in a different way, being somewhat passive, and how there was a change in their attitudes: "I could have taken offense and been exactly what they expected me to be. But I decided not to." Parent A went on to explain that even with all that effort, sometimes, in talking to teachers and principal, there is still a feeling of being attacked:

It's usually the teacher, the principal, and someone else sitting in a meeting with me and my child. And I feel like first of all, even if my child is wrong, I feel like I have to have my child's back simply because I do not want everybody in this room to be against my child. So then at that point, I have to be defensive. Because I'm not gonna have my child feel like everybody, nobody has their back. And that's just—so yeah, that's how I feel. I feel like just because of the way it is set up, I feel like I'm on the defensive. It doesn't help that everybody that's in authority is not Black. I haven't dealt with—and maybe I'm just sending my children to the wrong schools, but I haven't dealt with an African American principal or assistant principal.

A response I hear so often as a school board member, teacher, and community advocate from African American parents is being stereotyped as the angry Black parent when

showing any level of assertiveness or authority with White school personnel. These types of microaggressions have also been documented in research (Allen, 2012, Cooper, 2009).

I asked for this parent's thoughts on the role of the AAAC to be in the district:

What's been said of the AAAC is that they are very concerned with the African American disparities and the disparity in the educational process and with the disciplines. When I was on it a couple of years ago, it didn't seem like that to me. What it seemed to me was that they were always planning these events, these little things that they do at the schools. They have pizza, they have people sign up, they have people come in and talk. But it was always really general. They never seemed to me to be geared towards African Americans. They just seemed to be geared towards students in general. I never felt like it was like a specific—I'm saying that to say that I could've been Hispanic and probably would've had the same information or had been White and had the same information. It just didn't seem like it was geared—

Parent A went on to talk about the experiences of other Black families at church whose students previously attended the district's schools and how they have access to more opportunities in other districts:

It's a disparity. It is. And that's one of the things we are talking about, just the disparity in the educational process. Because you just don't hear about things. And I think if everybody had the same opportunities, you push your children more to do better. And your children will be more excited because there are more things to do. My son loves to draw. He is a great artist. And I've been trying to find something to keep that passion of his going. And I've actually had to go on my own outside of the school district to find things for him to do because there was nothing available to him.

Parent A went on to describe how she is just trying to “just get through” the elementary grades and to a son motivated. The family takes him on college trips such as to Cal Arts, during their open house, because art is something he is interested in. He is told, “All you have to do is just get through this. Then, let's get you through high school. Let's get your grades where they're supposed to be and the let's get you into Cal Arts.”

Parent A described frustration about the lack of opportunities for the son:

Based on the district website, they have college career and readiness. They have AVID, they have STEM and STEAM. They have people on the website in basketball uniforms. They have dance. And my only question is where? I do not see it at all. I don't see any extracurricular that my children—my son could possibly be involved in... I realize that information is- it's my responsibility to get the information. I also feel like that should be disseminated in such a way that I can get it. And if it's not disseminated like that, then that for me is a problem... I go through my son's backpack because it's a mess. So if there was anything there, I'd see it.

This parent was very politically astute of the politics of privilege and explained what was observed in how resources are allocated among the schools inequitably:

It's not available to everybody. And I think that is patently unfair. Because you do have students that could benefit but they find ways to exclude them. Who would not be able to benefit from these programs? So then if you know that, then why is it just a select group that are allowed this information or allowed to do these things? And it makes it seem that its almost like they're doing this so that they can have these pockets, so that they have this one area where the score is raised so that they can show that, okay, the score is here, its not the teachers, its not the district, and so you can see that it's us [referring to African Americans as the problem]

...Location, where you're living. Your address, I feel that just like division is [the name of a local street in her community], it divides. The street, it divides the access. And with location comes of course socioeconomic status because you live on that side, because you can't afford to go to the other side. So money, and I guess motivation. I think that a lot of time you just get so bogged down that its like whatever, just, you know. Because it seems like things are.... You get tired [she sighed, shrugged her shoulders, then cupped the right side of her face with her hand as she tilted her head to one side and leaned on the table she was sitting next to].

I saw frustration in the response and decided to move away from that topic of personal experience and asked what was part of the initial decision to serve on the AAAC before and how had that changed if it did:

My original goal for going was to find out exactly what they were doing and to see if there were different ways that I could help to make it better, to make the school systems better that my son was attending. That was my original goal. When I saw what they did, I mean it wasn't bad; there was nothing wrong with what they were doing. I just didn't think it was meeting my needs and I didn't think that it was something that I just wanted to continue to take time to do,

“cause it just seemed to me, okay this is just a big open house.” They keep you on the email list, so I would see different things that they were starting. When I saw this one and what they were talking about, I can’t remember what they titled it, but whatever it was, it just sparked my interest. That’s what had me to go to this new meeting.

Parent A was actually “quite impressed” with this most recent meeting of the district AAAC because of the gentleman whose role was the secretary of the group. This man attended the same church, and Parent A remembers the Black History month calendars he developed and was selling at church and the knowledge Bowl he hosted there, which was a Jeopardy-like game competition using the information from the calendars about various events and people in African American history. Parent A was very impressed and shared the first impression at that event:

I was wondering, I saw the different schools that were involved, and I was just—it sparked my interest to see if they’re teaching this in school, because that’s pretty cool. So I was really impressed with that he’s on the council. And then just the things they were talking about, not only about the discipline. Because I understand doing different discipline, but one of my biggest concerns is with the lack of opportunity for our kids. When they started talking about there’s a large disparity in the children that are in advanced classes. That, I was pretty happy about because it’s true. I’m glad it’s being discussed.

Teacher/Parent B Voice

Another committee member I interviewed who was African American and had been active with the committee for the last four years, as both a parent of a student in the district and for many years longer, a teacher in the district. When asked what was the purpose of the AAAC, Parent B responded,

The purpose and role of the AAAC is basically to identify students that are -- I guess you wanna say are underrepresented in the school. So what we try to do is try to encourage students who are underrepresented, mainly our African American population, and in some cases our Hispanic population as well comes into play a lot, to be involved in activities that bring out the positive or enrichment for them.

I asked this teacher-parent how the district utilized the AAAC to inform its decision and guide its practices:

I'm not sure how the district overall does it. I know they started it and there's a lot of programs that they want to do with it. I believe that they are trying to get most schools involved. They want most schools to have an AAAC. The problem right now is that every school in the district does not have one. I think they want one in every school so that everyone can be represented. So it's just about trying to get people wanting to hold the meetings, people wanting to I guess, hold the reins so they can run it.

I asked whether there were any success cases among the various school sites. Parent B did not know and explained the challenges of getting parents to participate on the committees:

They all come out for the programs. A lot of them, if the program is held during the day, it is difficult for the parents to come sometimes. But for the parents who are not working or the parents who live closer by or have a relative or someone they can send as a representative, they'll come out to support the programs. And we've had a lot of support with our African American History Month program that we started here at the school two years ago. We've had a lot of success.

Parent B was excited about this program and then showed me pictures from the program where there was racially diverse student participation portraying the various African American historical characters. I asked for a definition of what success in terms of this particular program:

I relate it as the parent support that comes, the children volunteering to come and participate. What was really interesting about our African American history program is that we have both Hispanic and Caucasian children representing African American figures in our program—full inclusion [She smiled].

I asked how involvement in the AAAC began and whether it was assumed or explicit that African American staff would help in regards to the efforts of the AAAC:

Well I think it's totally up to the school. It depends on their population of African American teachers, to be very honest. I know when I was asked a couple years ago, it wasn't just asked to me, it was asked to me and my other colleague, and she was Caucasian. So I think it's just a matter of who wanted to take care of it.

But I think it's normal that you would ask an African American person if that was the person that at your school to -- because they're vested. At least they may be vested. You would hope that they're vested. And the concerns, because you know, we know the struggle, you know. Even as an educator, you know the struggle of being the only one in your class at any given time. I know about being the only one, even in the district workshops at any given time, or going to a meeting and being the only one at any given time. Our students go through that on a regular basis so we know what they go through.

I then asked about some of the issues at the school:

I would like to see more programs where -- you have students that may be labeled as EL students. And that's for your Hispanic population. But you don't have a program as related for students that are African American. And a lot of African American students are not proficient in English-- They need those programs as well. And they should be the first ones as well -- well not so much the first ones, but they should be addressed in that same situation as the Hispanic population as well. Because some students both their parents speak English, and it's not a situation where it's a language barrier for them. They were raised on English. Both of their parents speak English. They just happen to be Hispanic. So I think that when we look at students who are in need, let's look at their need and not the student, not whether they're Black, White, purple, orange or green. Let's address them for the need that they are actually needing. I think if we start doing that more, then more of our kids can be addressed and their needs can be met.

I followed up and asked, "So you think the EL program kind of limited itself to the Latino -- just an assumption that it was for the Latino students and not looking at language proficiency in general?" The response discussed funding:

Well there's also funding for ELs, as opposed to like our AAAC there's no funding for that. There's no -- you have some type of funding that's available for EL programs and things like that for the students and their parents. But there's no funding for our AAAC. That's fundraising that you'd have to do. But we don't have any direct funds that come to us to say you can use this for your AAAC funds or something.

The formal structure of the district does not allow the AAAC to have its own funding source to support its efforts like the federally mandated DELAC and ELAC group. This issue was touched upon during many of the interviews across all participant groups.

I asked how racial and ethnic issues are addressed with teachers in terms of instructional delivery and school climate:

You figure like this: you go to these workshops. Some people go because they're curious. Some people go because this is something you should attend. These are things that people tell you you should attend. You can attend it, but if you don't apply it—that's in any workshop that we go to. The application is all up to you. And how much are you really walking away with or are you just putting the book on the shelf and letting it collect dust?

When I asked if there was anything else to say, focus turned to praise of the superintendent's sense of urgency and sensitivity to the issue while acknowledging a general level of anxiety for those doing anti-racist work:

I think that Dr. Wilson, she comes out and...addresses exactly what...needs to [be] address[ed]. And...does it in a very positive way. I don't think that [s/he] tries to hold back. And [is] very verbal about it or vocal about it when [s/he] speaks on it. So I think it's a lot for them to take in. I think it's a lot for them to take in because [s/he] is talking about it. [S/he's] not sweeping it under the rug. And a lot of people, they're scared. That's the only way I can describe it. You might be scared because we're bringing up a topic that you wanna sweep under the carpet. And you can't sweep it under the carpet.

When asked about feeling people wanted to sweep the issue under the carpet, the response dealt with unwillingness:

Because I still believe that, to some degree, some people, for whatever reason it may be, they just don't want to address those things. We're dealing with it in our country, as President Obama is the first African American president. It's no different. No matter how educated that man is, they still don't want to admit that he has talent. They wanna look at whatever faults he had, but his faults are far less than the faults of the presidents that we've had in the past.

Teacher/Parent C Voice. I anticipated one particular interview of a teacher-parent participant of the AAAC because of specific body language and comments I observed during the first AAAC meeting. I saw that this person was sort of distant and quiet during the meeting. At the end of the meeting, a short video titled, Making the Difference: Story of Panyee FC (TMB Bank, 2011), was shown about a youth soccer

team in a little floating village located off of southern Thailand where the deck was stacked against them. However, when the town finally pulled their efforts and resources together and got behind them, they overcame significant odds and were successful in both only being champions and building a top-notch soccer field on their floating village where they had not one before. After the video, one of the COAs stated, “I want to hear what you have to say about what you saw.” Comments were made such as, “Community support” and “Being able to see past the limitations to support students.” When it was the teacher/parent’s turn, the response was “Awaken the sleepwalkers...I directly connect that to a lot of our parents.” Everyone stopped in thought for a moment, and, then, the next person spoke, and the final comment made by the CAOSEO was, “Our focus has to stay on ending the predictability of outcomes for African American students.” That comment marked the first time I saw this particular teacher-parent make a smile. I knew I had to know more about what was going on in this individual’s head during this meeting.

When we finally connected, the first thing I asked about were feelings about the first meeting. The response came very slowly:

Well, let me say this. The reason I appeared skeptical, I know a few of them, some I didn’t, but many of them I do remember...these are people who we had gone through the AAAC before. And, in that time, I’ve seen a lot and I’ve heard a lot. And I understand things in a way that if you were to talk to me for a long while, you would understand why I looked the way that I did.

This teacher/parent had been part of the group since its beginning. I what was meant by “awaken the sleepwalkers.” Like a storyteller, words came in a very slow, somber but dramatic tone:

I had gone through the AAAC several times at several school sites where it was something where I was going to the meetings and trying to sit in and see—we were excited about trying to move forward in the ideology of what we thought AAAC stood for. But, more and more, we began to understand—when I say we,

myself and a couple of other[s] that I met along the way, who were trying to diligently be involved. But what we began to understand was it was something else. In other words, that definite meaning of what we thought that it stands for, not necessarily just pro-Black, but then there's such a need with the achievement gap—What I did for years, I just downloaded a report card. I wanted to know what this was about, this gap between the African American subgroup and others. And I started doing my own research, and I started checking out how the scores throughout the different schools in our district, especially where my focus was.

I started understanding that there was something; there was a crisis that was taking place right under my nose. And just because my kids may be doing well in school and they have somebody that's involved and parents that are involved, it doesn't mean that I don't have to carry this burden.

Joint efforts with others at the school site AAAC were generalized to the point of not meeting the needs of African American parents. For example,

If we would come up with something that was completely an issue that we saw happening with Black parents being able to communicate with educators. And we'd come up with a way to incorporate those parents into some kind of something that we had—it would turn into the Latino—it would turn into something—it could never be specifically geared towards the need. And, so, everything started changing. And, then, we began wondering what was it all about. So, the look I had at the meeting is, what is it all about? What are we actually doing here? Where are we gonna go with it? And, then, my comment about the sleepwalker, that was such a—I threw it out there so fast. But there's so much in the ideology of sleepwalker, and why I came up with—and some people have said that they heard it before. But I thought of sleepwalkers when I look at our people, especially out here [referencing the general community where she lives].

At that reference, I immediately had a visual of the biblical reference of the Valley of Dry Bones found in Ezekiel 37: 1-14. I have heard this passage used as an analogy or metaphor describing the post-slavery experience of Blacks in the Diaspora by pastors and other emancipatory leaders, as long as I can remember, while growing up in a primarily Black community. The interviewee said,

Let me tell you, when I think of sleepwalkers, the reason why I call our people sleepwalkers, coming up with ways and thinking of different ways that we can awake the sleepwalkers. What I meant by that is it was a small moment for us to tell why we're there. And I had to think, how could I encompass everything that

I'm thinking and feeling in one word. So, I threw that out there. But if you think about our people here in this [name of community], the way it looks, the things that I'm seeing both from as a parent perspective being involved with parents, which I'm so grateful, that I was with PTA I'm so grateful, that I was infused in the school programs. I can be there hands-on as a parent so that I can hear and I can see. So, I see how many of us weren't involved and don't come out to anything and don't wanna communicate with the teachers.

I've been on both sides of the fence. I've seen what happens, what does it look like when you are a parent that looks like me, who does communicate, who does email teachers, who do calls, and is involved in making sure that the kids are turning in their homework and still get ignored. Making sure they're studying and still the same reaction.

The same response, the same superiority complex thrown in your face. And, so, I had to put that in perspective so that I wouldn't become bitter. I started looking at every perspective; the lower socioeconomic subgroup and then I looked at ourselves as Black people. And this is when I came up with sleepwalking. The thing about sleepwalking, if you look at a sleepwalker, basically, by definition, it's someone that walks around and performs actions while they're sleeping. But the thing about a sleepwalker is that it trips you out because you're looking at them, and they look like they're awake. I'm looking at my people and they look like they're awake. But the symptoms of a person that's awake, the functions of a person that's awake, I don't see.

I made short reference to Cornell West's two books, *Race Matters* (1993) and *Democracy Matters* (2004). I mentioned that he discusses sleepwalking and nihilism in the Black community:

Absolutely! Who doesn't care about their children in some way? You can look at the kids, even those who don't look as clean and they may not look as—and the parents may not be as articulate. Something that they are doing, that one or those two things that they are doing to the best of their ability... I hear things from individual parents along the time in my journey in this school district, and having my children in school. I hear stories from Black parents that I'm so surprised at some of the experiences that they've had. And I say to myself, if seven of you or five of you were talking to each other about these things that are happening, that's better than one voice. But, then, nobody is in a space where we can communicate what it is that's happening. And, so, when I'm in a session and I say something like, wake up the sleepwalkers, it's something that I'm feeling. But then I'm always asking myself, am I even in the right setting? is it the right platform for this? When you really start wanting to get into the meat of helping Blacks figure out how to become aware of what's happening and how to communicate with teachers, who sometimes won't respect you or your child no matter what you do

or how you sound like. But still being able to press on, and able to move forward and encourage your child.

This individual also talked about being tired of always having to fight for even the basic respect for self and for a child, even as a teacher, to the point of contemplating withdrawing the child from the district. There is a daily struggle of having to choose to be a bystander or an advocate through experiences with parents outside the school setting.

For example,

When I try to leave this thing alone, and I try to go into my world where...I have a beautiful home, my [spouse], and my children. When I try to disappear, when I disappear, when I try to disappear, I call myself disappearing [Thinking out loud]. "I see you, I understand what's happening, I know what's going on. Okay it's the teachers, I get it. I got it." I know what the parents are going through. Whenever I get to that point, it follows me. I can go to the grocery store and I'll just be standing in line. And this lady would be with her kids and she'll be, like, [looking] tired in the line in a store. She said, "I feel like I'm just going through all of this with these teachers and the school. He never was like this when we lived in LA" [referencing the woman's son and his experience at his current school in Sky View].

She laughed and said, "Girl! I'm in line!" We laugh and for a moment. I slip out of my researcher role and we share a spiritual and cultural affinity of the *struggle*. Listening to her, I reflected on my own positionality as a community advocate, elected official, mother, teacher and understood the place she was in, wanting to sometimes "turn it off:" the caring, the commitment to liberation and social justice. The response continued:

'Cause I tell you the truth when I tell you, you can't run from that which is calling you. And talk about make room for—I can't even—and then something or someone will call, or somebody will reach back out. And I'm like, okay Lord, so what do you want me to do? And so this has been the journey that I've been on. I've had a good time. I've had a good time. I loved being on the seat when we did the Measure L campaign. I loved being a part of that. I loved being on the advisory council for the budget. I loved that. I loved being in the PTA with the parents. I loved all of it. Because it was for a purpose. It has to be purposeful.

The comment about purpose and purposefulness prompted me to ask about the agenda for that initial meeting of the district AAAC, whether any of the members had any input in preparing the agenda. The answer was that “the agenda is always prepared and it’s always facilitated by somebody from the district office.” Furthermore,

They have to make sure—well I think of Black Wall Street, I call it. I think of we’re not allowed to get to the place where we’re too—what’s the word—militant. Everything has to be watered down and kept in its proper perspective.

I then asked about the purpose and mission of the AAAC: “It’s the district. It’s sanctioned by the district. Nothing to do with the people except we hope the people come. Come out and talk and help us to continue to appear at least like we’re trying to do something.” At this point, I picked up on cynicism again in response to the mission and purpose of the group:

It’s only implied. It’s always implied. I’d like to see it, if someone would just please show me the—if somebody would show me the mission statement, I would be really excited about that. Because I have never—I don’t know where it’s going. That’s why it’s difficult for me to—that’s my first time being back in a long time.

Containment or Engagement

Two months later, I received, as part of a group email, information about the second meeting of the year for the district level AAAC. Included in the meeting notice was an update that the new district CAOSEO would be assuming the role as the district liaison to the AAAC. The note included acknowledgement and gratitude to the predecessor for helping to build a “thriving AAAC.” There was also a statement as to a goal for the group:

Our goal is to have majority parent participation, and I believe that we can make that happen. Our committed teachers and administrators are anxious to join with parents and community members to engage in authentic and

enriching conversations, as well as putting actions in place to strengthen outcomes for our students.

By this time, I had completed data collection and was well into coding and analyzing the data. However, my curiosity in the change of facilitators compelled me to attend the second meeting. The agenda of the meeting included AAAC site updates, Youth AAAC updates, Parent Night Planning, LCAP discussion (Goals 2.4, 2.5, 3.3), Real Men Read and Wishes, Hopes and Concerns. The two take-aways from the meeting were that there are four school sites out of 21 schools that have begun the process of establishing a site AAAC. For all sites, start times varied in an effort to accommodate parent participation. However, for all of the sites, the initial turnout was small. Secondly, at one of the middle schools, after having two adult AAAC meetings that were poorly attended, this social studies teacher and colleagues focused on starting a youth version of the AAAC at that school. This report was the high note of the meeting. The social studies teacher reported that the students had chosen their own name, African American Action Council, Jr., and that they determined that the group was open to all students who want to make a difference. The students developed their purpose and had elected officers: included president, secretary and treasurer. The students selected as their purpose,

To celebrate and educate people on African American culture and history and to empower and give a voice to African American students in an open and less-threatening environment and to foster a welcoming and inclusive school climate for all students.

Everyone appeared impressed by what was reported. The teacher went shared that the initial meeting had 39 students in attendance, mostly 8th graders. It was not clear whether all of the students were African American. The list of activities the students wanted to focus on was shared and included addressing and discussing topics that affect

African Americans and our community, Big Brother/Big Sister program, Conflict Management, Teach Respect and Manners, Community Service Projects, fundraisers, Kwanzaa Celebration, and a book club of African American authors. They conducted an informal survey and asked students to share what they were interested in discussing.

Among the topics included,

- Learn about their culture/Mentoring students/Teaching them about their culture/What's happening in and outside of school
- Getting suspended too much
- The safety of Black people
- Dress Code issues—Why are AA always cited and other ethnicities are not
- Discuss bullying/special needs kids/kids with disabilities
- Why are we called Black instead of African Americans?
- Police brutality/racism/origin of the “N” word/ Calling people the “N” word
- Racism at school/Black people in jail/statistics
- Why do people have a lot of problems with African Americans/Dress code inequity
- Community service and school service
- How we got to this free country

Everyone commented on the quality of input that was gathered from this group of students and the teachers were quite proud of their accomplishment. I thought to myself, was this the first time that that any significant effort was made to solicit direct and unscripted input from African American students about their specific concerns and schooling experiences?

What's in a Name?

I eventually followed up with the secretary of the AAAC, who kept the minutes from the meetings, and, after an investigation, was not able to find where the group had developed a formal purpose and mission statement itself. I eventually was able to obtain historical information about the AAAC from an individual who was one of the original members and still remains employed with the district. The document provided stated,

The African American Action Committee was founded in the 2000-2001 academic year, as a response to the glaring achievement gap evidenced by results on the California State Standards Test-CST. The idea was presented to [superintendent during that time] and cabinet. The concept of a committee devoted to generating solutions to address African American students' skill deficits was well received by the superintendent, but there was little in the way of monetary support, nor was any department assigned the duty to insure follow through. The actual function of the committee was more ceremonial/symbolic-observance of African American History Month, acknowledgement of African American leaders in the schools and community and meetings for acknowledging what we already knew: African American students performance on standardized exams was well below that of their White or Hispanic counterparts. Under [the next superintendent's] leadership-his tenure began in 2006, the committee was assigned to the Educational Services department. Meetings happened with greater regularity and there was an impetus to have site AAAC committees. However, there were no site committees in existence during his tenure. With Dr. Wilson at the helm, we currently have four site AAAC committees. We still are slow to truly address the achievement gap. While planning has begun to focus resources on equity and access for underserved students we have yet to devote monetary support toward tutoring programs, Saturday school, MELD programs, adult literacy, or district-wide culturally responsive teaching. We are piloting "Capturing Kids Hearts" training to address the importance of developing relationships with students. It was chosen as the initial equity training because it did NOT deal specifically with issues of race. This was a very intentional choice because the leadership felt strongly that our teachers would have responded disfavorably to any training that directly dealt with race, privilege and social injustice.

I searched for more about the pilot program the individual mentioned, "Capturing Kids Hearts." According to the developer's website, it is a 3-day participatory off-site program that "provides tools for administrators, faculty and staff to build positive, productive, trusting relationships — among themselves and with their students" (Flippen Group, 2015). The five key outcomes are improved student achievement, decreased discipline referrals, increased attendance, increased graduation rates, and improved teacher satisfaction (Flippen Group, 2015).

This summary of the history of the group addressed some of the gaps I had in understanding the origins and focus of this advisory group. After reading this email, I

returned to the participant comments. I was left with the question of the extent to which input from African American parents and community is truly valued beyond the institutional need to be in compliance with state and federal mandates.

The School Board Demonstrates Collective Political Will

At the end of interviews I allowed participants to contribute additional information or knowledge, including addressing any area that I might have missed. One board member in particular tried to situate the cognitive process of board members, teachers and staff in how they interpreted and understood working with a diverse student population. This board member stated,

I think that if there's any flaw in any one of us as board members or as teachers or staff, is that we see the world through our own lens. And that lens is able to change. But it has to be constant—we have to constantly understand that the lens that everybody else looks through is different and be sensitive to that. But not just sensitive is that we have to sometimes have those tough conversations so that we can gain some understanding of what every child is going to need. I'm very broad. I approach things from a very broad perspective. But I've learned in my work with homelessness that you have to segment. You have to go down to specifics. And if you take, okay we have 2,000 homeless people, and we're gonna focus on this 100 because they're veterans, and we're gonna make sure that we do that. How do we work with them different from all of the others?

It's the same technique. And by breaking it down, we've come to a better understanding, okay we know now that for veteran success in housing, these other supports have to be there. And it's that constant breaking it down to smaller pieces that helps us understand. So it's a constant role of study and review. And what works in our community is not gonna work somewhere else. Or it might perfectly. So there's a lot of trial.

I asked if the board was up to the task, was comfortable with looking at data and asking questions. The reply was, "Not yet...it's a process."

After leaving the field, I learned through the local paper that SVSD's school board had unanimously approved a consultation contract with the National Equity Project, a California based non-profit organization whose stated mission is to

“Dramatically improve educational experiences, outcomes, and life options for students and families who have been historically underserved by their schools and districts” (National Equity Project, nd). The agency will work with central office leadership, administrator coaches and school site principals this spring and summer. The superintendent is quoted in the article as stating, “This is one of the springboard pieces that is supposed to help us develop a system-wide, multi-year approach to addressing issues of equity and improving student learning outcomes” (AV Press, 2016). The Chief Academic Officer of student Equity was quoted as saying,

The NEP will help me learn how to examine and make adjustments to how the district does business... It’s a little different than some other companies we worked with that bring trainers in and they provide professional development for teachers. This is more helping me be strategic in the work that I’m doing. (AV Press, 2016)

I sent an email to the Chief Academic Officer acknowledging the board’s decision. She and I had attended a training at the NEP headquarters at the same time during the fall by coincidence, and I was familiar with their work and recognized the board had demonstrated political will to move forward and contract with the organization. Her response to my email stated, “The article itself has caused a small firestorm from the teachers’ association, but I welcome it. Dissonance is what it takes to start change, and we finally have dissonance!”

Summary

The findings from this study exposed gaps in the governance and central office team’s capacity to uncover systemic inequities using other types of data beyond outcome performance and discipline type data, to inform and understand the day-to-day on-the-ground conditions of schooling and how district policies and school practices effect

different populations of students. Though the Sky View's board had begun to take bold actions in addressing the most obvious disparities in outcomes for Black students, board members had a limited capacity in looking at data and asking system-level questions, to guide decisions and gain insight in understanding the *on-the-ground* schooling experiences of Black students beyond proficiency testing, attendance and disciplinary data. A large part of the focus on traditional types of data was due to structural misdirection influenced by ideological structures, statutory mandates and processes, and beliefs/assumptions of board members and staff. Secondly, board lacked an explicit policy framework or theory of action for change to justify its rationale for choosing one strategy over another. Though the district aligned its LCAP, strategic plan, and school site plans, the specific assumptions on which it based decisions, and the linkages between specific strategies and the desired outcomes were absent. Finally, there lacked a clear nexus between the district and its AAAC/Advisory Council, and, for some participants, the existence of the group served more the district's purpose than that of the participants themselves. The objective of this research was to understand how an organized collective of district actors, with a key focus on the school board, could influence the organizational culture around the issue of equity and access to improve the educational experiences and outcomes of Black students. The following chapter discusses findings in relation to the literature and presents recommendations to both the district and areas that would benefit for future research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter begins with a brief summary of the current study, which includes an overview of the problem, purpose statement, research question, methodology used, and summary of major findings. Following the introduction, the discussion section provides an analysis of the findings. After the analysis section are the implications for policy and practice, followed by suggestions for future research. The conclusion ends this chapter.

Summary of the Study

This study focused on the problem of practice of school board governance teams' ability to explicitly influence institutional norms and practices with the purpose of disrupting institutional and structural inequities within a legal and policy framework of colorblindness, meritocracy and accountability. The discourse on race, education policy and how local policy leaders make sense of Black students' achievement disparities and outcomes remains silent within educational legal and policy frameworks. These ideological structures (colorblindness, meritocracy, deficit thinking, zero tolerance, accountability and standardized testing) limit the governance teams' ability to understand and identify how these restrictive frameworks limit opportunities for student populations whom the educational system ineffectively served, specifically Black students.

The critical issue that drives this study is the phenomena of disproportionality and access disparity among the African American student population within a single PK-8 public school district. Using combined traditions of case study and critical ethnography, this qualitative study explored the following research questions:

1. How does the governance team monitor and manage student diversity and equity in the district?

- a. What process or methods does the board use to understand the education-related experiences and social emotional needs of its Black student population?
 - b. Is there a socially constructed consensus or shared knowledge among policymakers, staff, parents and community that affirm/ignore student identity, facilitate/inhibit student connectivity?
 - c. What effects do board policies and district practices have on the distribution of social rewards and outcomes for Black students?
2. How does the school board negotiate and manage external and internal influences/conflict that emerges as they attempt to de-legitimize the status quo?

In analyzing data, I approached the research setting under three assumptions. The first was influenced by Reskin's (2012) systems perspective of a race discrimination system defined as a set of dynamical related subsystems of domains such as education, healthcare, employment, and banking (p. 18). She sees this system as a product of both race-linked disparities and belief systems that perpetuate it (p. 19). She posits, in order to understand persistent racial disparities across domains, the interdependence or reciprocal causality across the domains must be acknowledged. In other words, ascriptive disparities or cumulative disadvantage are the product of social structures and process and not a result of inherent differences between individuals. Reskin suggested strategies and interventions from a systems approach that could transform such a system by targeting the subsystems. For the subsystem of public education, Reskin suggested increasing accountability and implementing decision-making practices that minimized distortion (p. 31). Reskin's rationale is that decision makers will be more likely to make fair decisions and less prone to bias if they know that they will be held accountable.

The second assumption I used to analyze my data was Hill-Collin's (2009) theory that racism is a system of power with four domains (p. 53). In this post-racial era,

conversations around race and racism within most public settings are often taboo as the discussion is most often understood at the interpersonal level identifying with examples of hatred and bigotry vs. structural racism resulting from a historical legacy and accumulation of racialized practices whether intentional or not. Using Hill-Collin's four domains, I was able use the framework to analyze colorblind racism as it presented itself within SVSD. Some of the coding process was driven by the data itself rather than forced to fit within either of the two assumptions.

There were two key patterns that emerged from the data. The first was structural misdirection influenced by ideological structures, statutory mandates and processes, and beliefs/assumptions, which organized district actions framed in deficit thinking (responding to state and federal mandates, driven by compliance, narrowly focusing on negative indices of performance gaps, discipline, and special education referrals), causing perpetuation of societal racial hierarchies; limited the capacity of the governance team and central office to address issues beyond the symptoms; and isolated and contained Black students and the adults who attempted to advocate on their behalf. The second pattern appeared in the ways in which the district demonstrated resistance to some aspects of racism within the system: explicit mention of equity as a priority in board policy and district actions, alignment and re-allocation of resources to carry out board actions. As the district went through a transformation, reproduction and disruption of the status quo happened simultaneously, as change took place in small but significant increments. Appendices 1 and 2 provide a general summary how the patterns appeared after coding using Hill-Collin's DOP framework.

The data suggests that school board members and district staff acknowledge that Black students have not been served well by the district between 2007 and 2014, the years of NCLB implementation, and there is a conscious effort moving forward to repair the system so that it is responsive to the needs of all of its students with a particular focus on African American students.

From 2007 through the current school year, the data revealed the district has no process in place for the board or district actors to understand the education-related experiences and social emotional needs of its Black student population. Outside of the LCAP, no formal theory of action for change was in place that aligns its reform policies, or dictates organizational structure which will change district culture over time. The structures and processes in place for monitoring and managing diversity and equity in the district are currently limited to using disaggregated data on suspension and expulsion rates by race, socioeconomic status and by language proficiency, attendance, achievement data and Lexile measures which measures the reading ability of an individual (MetaMetrics, 2016). According to the Chief Academic Officer, the initial concentration to comply with the new Common Core State Standards has been on general implementation. To date, metrics have not been developed to measure success of students under the new standards and the district is playing catch-up.

Even when the school board and central office staff acknowledged there were systemic inequities which marginalized African American students, their capacity address the issue was restricted by their limited capacity in collecting data, which lacked both student and parent voice about on-the-ground conditions of schooling. This was evident by the looks of surprise observed by many in attendance at the second AAAC meeting

when an African American middle school teacher organized a junior version of the AAAC among students, and shared their responses to an informal survey administered to the student group. These middle school students were articulate about perceived isolation and negative racialized experiences on campus as African American students, including what resources and activities they needed to feel connected and to improve campus climate.

District central office staff is beginning to work with SSAs by embedding the culturally responsive component of PBIS without actually changing the name from PBIS to Culturally Responsive Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports as they fear that principals will become overwhelmed, according to one of the COAs who provided an overview of the rollout for this particular initiative. The plan is for the principals to begin to hear the term, and to integrate culturally responsive activities into PBIS under engagement and climate in the LCAP goals. From there, the plan is to transition the SSAs to the science behind implicit bias. The plan is to introduce the topic using a video presentation featuring Kim Papillon to address the issue of defensiveness and guilt associated with cognitive dissonance when majority cultures are confronted with the issue of race and bias. For the teaching staff, the plan is to focus on the quality of relationships between school staff and the students they serve through the pilot program Capturing Kid's Heart which promises to increase student achievement and lower discipline referrals. So far, the change process has been incremental in the way programs and processes are rolled out as pilots and initiatives, operating at different levels throughout the district initiated from the top down. Fullan (2011) identifies these types of efforts badly placed as lead drivers for whole systemic reform, as they do not situate

educators and students as the key driving force and lack an explicit theory of action and philosophy that binds them together. Fullan posits, that the right drivers are effective because they work directly on changing the culture, “fostering intrinsic motivation of teachers and students, affect all teachers and students in continuous improvement of instruction and learning; inspire collective team work; and affect all teachers and students-100 per cent (p. 3).”

The district has included in their general narrative language about providing more opportunities for all students in the way of requiring a minimum level of basic extracurricular activities on all campuses. However, in the area of under-representation, members of the AAAC and some of the COAs and SSAs interviewed felt that the district lacked focus on tracking Black students’ access to opportunities such as advanced coursework and representation in both extracurricular academic and non-academic activities. That is not to say those conversations were not taking place; however, they were not at the same level of dominance in conversations as the focus on discipline and special education referrals were when it came to Black students. This was the perception of the parents and staff interviewed. When I asked the superintendent if the district was looking at its structures and processes for placement in advanced programs, extracurricular activities and the like, Dr. Wilson replied,

Yes, we try and we have. And, actually, what we’re doing, is looking at it through a lens of equity, making sure that every school has at least a foundational set of things that are offered because we had some schools that offer quite a variety, and we have some schools that didn’t. So, we met with all of our middle school folks. And it’s like, okay, everybody has to have this at a minimum because it doesn’t make any difference if you live on the east side or west side of town. I want all the kids to have access to these things.

Is there more that can and should be done? Absolutely. Because it’s not just making sure that you have these opportunities and options available, but,

additionally, it's about how do we make sure students know and make sure that they're doing what they need to do to have access to it. So, we are going to be doing that work. The first piece is making sure that those opportunities are even available to them. So, yeah, we're looking at our structures and we're looking at what's available to all of our students because the demographics are slightly different. But what I don't want is schools with high percentages, have fewer options, and schools with lower percentages have more options. That seems a little reversed.

Finally, there was a lack of nexus between the district and the AAAC, which seemed to play more of a role to meet the compliance needs of the district rather than the actual needs of the participants themselves. When asked how the group advised the district on policy, the superintendent replied,

In policy, right now, nothing. In practice, right now, it is a group that usually is charged with developing family nights. They develop the outreach opportunities for the community that help to increase awareness about things that are available, promote positive role models in the community, and support various events.

The initial growth of the AAAC was organic, out of a group of concerned adults who rallied around the needs of African American students. The district sanctioned the group back in 2007 as a district level advisory but never allocated resources to build the group's capacity nor was the board explicit in requiring school sites to form site-based councils, say, for instance, if they had 10% or greater African American students enrolled. Parents, employees and even some board members interviewed compared what was not happening with this group with what was happening with the district and site English Learner advisories.

The AAAC's agenda is centered on defined district needs. However, what the district defined as the problem and what the parents identify as the problem are wide apart. The district's focus is school climate and district discipline. While the parents did not disagree with the district's focus, many felt too much emphasis was placed on

discipline to the point of creating a hostile environment for their students. This sentiment was also shared by the group of African American students surveyed at one of the middle schools. The concerns among the parents and parent/teachers interviewed were mostly centered on the quality of interpersonal relations and expanding opportunities for their children. Some AAAC participants suggested there was a level of control or surveillance involved with district staff taking the lead in the group, which left parents without an authentic space to voice their concerns.

The district relied heavily on the AAAAC district level and site-level advisories where they existed to deliver its messages and facilitate parent involvement among Black parents without monetary resources or an organic form of self-governance. The district focused the efforts of the AAAC around parent involvement, which translated to getting parents to attend meetings so that staff could meet their compliance obligations. Parents shared they understood the need to focus on discipline, but they did not find the information provided either meaningful or useful for their immediate concerns and perceptions of unequal resources and opportunities for their students. With the district dominating the agenda of the AAAC, some parents continue to feel alienated without a space to have their specific needs addressed. Some of the emotions described by parents were being emotionally tired, frustrated and conflicted with the educational system as to how it views their children and themselves as advocates.

Relying on such a narrow lens (standardized test scores, discipline data, attendance, and special education referrals) to measure on-the-ground conditions and guide decision making reproduces similarly inequitable systems, which, ultimately, deny access to some students while moving others forward, whether intentional or not

(Johnson & Avelar-LaSalle, 2010). While some actors, such as COAs, understood the urgency of the issue and the need to be explicit in embedding a cultural responsive component into the implementation of PBIS, they felt it would take time for the majority of school staff to get to there, as they pointed to how the dynamics of the larger community are reflected in the school district, a mindset that has not accepted the browning of the region over the last 10 to 15 years. This is an example of a negative external influence.

There was a consensus that the two most significant board actions that affected student outcomes were hiring the current superintendent, who was African American and home grown and approving the position of CAO/SEA, and, then, appointing someone from within the district, who happen to be White and also homegrown. Both individuals were seen as highly qualified, possessed equity mindsets, were data-driven, served as site principals in the district, and had garnered much respect from both staff and board members. Over a three-year period, the school board clearly exercised a collective political will and took bold steps towards disrupting systemic inequities through these two actions. However, the district ultimately saw the limitations of its capacity to address the larger issue of system inequity on its own and took another political risk by seeking outside support through the consultation of the National Equity Project. These actions provided legitimacy to the board's declarations of commitment to systemic reform grounded in equity.

My second research question centered on understanding how the school board negotiated and managed external and internal influences prior to LCFF, including any conflict that emerged, as they attempted to de-legitimize the status quo. Based on

participant comments, because a large proportion of Black students were categorized in either the Title I (low socioeconomic status) or special education, they received a generalized response of district actions in addressing their needs. None of the participants interviewed pointed out any conflict among the board, parent or bargaining groups. One COA did mention the low morale among the site principals relating to the magnitude of new district-wide initiatives implemented alongside a new state accountability system and new state academic standards. The governing board's contention with state and federal mandates as an external influence was mainly that money was insufficient to meet the needs of the students whose achievement they were responsible for improving. Due to the short time in the field, this question could not be adequately explored.

Race is one of the difficult conversations and one where colorblindness plays out the most in public education. The superintendent managed the trust of the board and central office staff by ensuring that conversations were foregrounded with data and research-based responses. California's new funding and accountability framework, the LCFF and its reinforcing policy, LCAP, gave the superintendent leverage and a framework to engage in conversations about racial issues. When asked if it was difficult to discuss racial issues with the board, central office and school sites, the superintendent responded:

I think it is easier now because there's more information available. And it's talking about what is based on data. And, then, we kind of lead into a discussion about why, why might that exist, and then how do we respond to this. Because no one -- if truly everyone believes that you're here in the best interest of students, all students, then no one can accept the kind of results, disparate results that we would get for any particular student group.

Many of the most recent initiatives around student equity and those specifically addressing the LCAP goals relating to African American students, have only been

partially implemented in the last school year with plans for full implementation over the next two years. Thus, far, actions taken to address the defined needs of Black students in SVSD have been incorporated into the two LCAP goals focusing on engagement and climate and situated under cultural responsive teaching and PBIS. A limitation of this study was not being able to stay in the field to observe the general staff and public response to the district's work with the National Equity Project where Black students are named as key recipients of the district's effort. How will the board and central office actors respond to resistance and dissonance among both internal and external stakeholders?

Discussion

Structural Misdirection Influenced by Ideological Structures, Statutory Mandates and Processes

Disproportionality and access disparity among poor and students of color in public school districts are outcomes of a discriminatory, racialized and highly political schooling system. This does not necessarily mean that these acts are always intentional. However, the hegemonic legacy of White privilege and superiority (whether conscious or subconscious), layered with individual assumptions and dispositions of school staff is embedded in school policies and practices. The cumulative effect of these variables play out negatively and differently among various culturally and racially student groups.

When referencing Hill-Collins' (2009) DOP framework, the emerging themes intersected across all four domains: structural, disciplinary, cultural and interpersonal. The most obvious theme that emerged was the district's purposefulness to meet the needs of all students as they emerge from a reactive posture, taking actions from a deficit-

focused policy position focusing on changing the behavior of Black students and their parents. The move is now to target staff beliefs, expectations, and school structures which can create hostile and restrictive environments and barriers to opportunity for African American students and adults who advocate on their behalf. Though SVSD is to be commended for taking very bold actions in a very short period of time in response to the issues of inequity identified in some areas of the district system, all of these efforts are layered onto existing ideological structures embedded deeply across the system (colorblindness, meritocracy and deficit thinking). Without understanding how these existing structures and mental models affect access and opportunity, SVSD will not be successful in reorienting the culture of the district to one that foregrounds equity. In contrast, similar systems/processes of inequity will be reproduced, as the focus is still narrowly framed based on containment and compliance. One board member, when asked how the district monitored patterns and assessed the needs of Black students within the district responded, “The biggest issue is just being able to connect with parents, and helping parents understand the need for expectations from their students in terms of how they conduct themselves in the classroom.”

In a presidential address to the American Educational Research Association, Ladson-Billings (2006) challenged the use of the term *achievement gap* as not adequate to understand deeply embedded inequality within the structures and processes of public education which create an opportunity gap focused on the inputs of education rather than the outputs. Likewise, the focus on simple disproportionality narrows the equity focus to discipline and changing student behavior using a deficit lens rather than evaluating the

opportunities available for students and parents which meet their needs and build capacity to fulfill their potential.

School Board and Central Office Capacity

Lindsey et al. (2009) posit, “You can not be an agent of personal or organizational change or make improvements in the system if you have not first examined your role and function within it” (p. 71). A theory of action essentially effectuates a school board’s stated core beliefs and commitments. Within the context of school reform, Adams (2006) argued that, for a school board, a theory of action “is a set of beliefs, given the board’s theory of change about what actions what board actions will lead to the fulfillment of the board’s commitments” (p. 33). It begins with assumptions of why and how a particular or systems of initiatives will work, the necessary pre-conditions needed to bring about short, medium and long-term change, specific outcomes that need to be achieved and proceeds as the board’s strategic plan and metrics are used to monitor both implementation and outcomes.

What came to mind after interviews with board members, central office and administrative staff, was that, while achievement and discipline were consistently disproportionate over the last seven years and there is an acknowledgement that this group of students have been ill served by the district policies, there has been little outside of anecdotal data that includes student and parent voice describing the academic and social emotional needs of African American students. When the social studies teacher shared the survey results collected from a group of middle school students, the adult participants in the room seemed surprised that students were so articulate in describing daily inequities involving discipline, microaggressions, lack of opportunity, a desire to

learn about themselves, Black history, a desire to participate in community service projects, racism and how these affect their community.

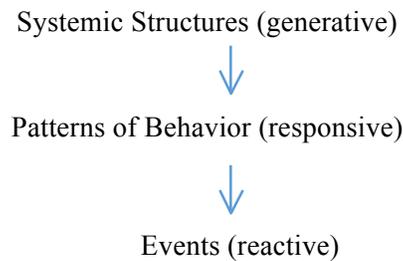
Many recent school reforms require or assume a capacity on the part of schools and school leaders to use data internally to identify priorities for change, to evaluate the impact of decisions they make, to understand their students' academic standing, to establish improvement plans and to monitor and assure progress. Currently, the emphasis for staff development is on teaching and administrative staff, without the school board having a foundational understanding of how their policy changes will play out within the context of their district, as each district has its own context in which these systemic inequities manifest themselves. When I asked one school board member whether they felt the board was comfortable looking at data and asking system-level questions, the response was, "Not yet...it's a process." Not mentioned in the news article announcing SVSD's contract with the National Equity Project was the school board's participation in the training. This situation reflects Rorrer et al.'s (2008) argument that the only way to support system reform that involves changes and shifts to district and school level structures and processes is to align those shifts or changes with "refined beliefs, expectations, and norms" (p. 318). Based on findings from this study, in addition to building board capacity in the areas of systems thinking and data analysis, there is a critical need for capacity building in the area of racial literacy and cultural proficiency to refine beliefs, expectations and norms at the school board level. Horsford (2014) defines racial literacy in education as the ability to understand "what race is, why it is, and how it is used to reproduce inequality and oppression" (p. 125). Lindsey et al. (2009) define cultural proficiency as, "A mindset, a world view...a way a person or organization make

assumptions for effectively describing, responding to, and planning for issues that arise in a diverse environment” (p. 3). It is critical as the entity whose primary responsibility is to create and sustain the conditions for school success, that the school board itself simultaneously build capacity in systems thinking, data analysis, racial literacy and cultural proficiency to better understand its role in maintaining and disrupting inequitable systems of schooling (Canen, 2010; Horsford, 2014; Stevenson, 2014).

Data analysis. In public education, the persistent challenge of underachievement among traditionally marginalized student demographic groups has largely been located within students, their families and communities, using the lens of cultural deficit rather than addressing the problems within school policies, structures and practices. For Black students, this perspective has become normalized within educational research, higher education, school structural features, processes, and practices, and frames the parameters of discussion such that failure, low achievement and poor behavior are predicted. These perspectives are what help to contribute to the isolation and situating this group of students ‘at risk’ for academic failure.

According to Johnson and Avelar-LaSalle (2010), district and school structural features, processes, and practices are components of systems that affect students’ well-being and academic outcomes (p. 197). Unfortunately, many governance teams, together with central office, lack the capacity to create and manage systems of data to systematically understand how policy and practices affect on-the-ground, day-to-day efforts of the district from a systems thinking perspective. From a systems perspective (Figure 5.1), you are looking at structures and how they produce reoccurring patterns of behavior within an organization and how these reoccurring patterns of behaviors react to

various structures and processes (Senge, 2006). Powell (2010) posits, “The efficacy of a policy can only be adequately understood by looking at how it interacts with the environment and with other policies, and the extent to which it produces desirable stable patterns” (p. 9).



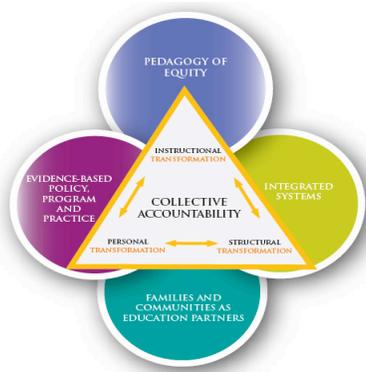
Source: Senge (2006)

Figure 5.1. Senge’s Systems Perspective

Johnson and Avelar-LaSalle define data as information that can be used to describe conditions in schools and the district that affect students’ experiences in either positive or negative ways (p. 18). The authors argue that a district’s focus is misdirected if efforts are limited to implementing more programs, initiatives and increasing resources rather than increasing the urgency and capacity to “Delve deep into their educational psyche about what is taken for granted as acceptable, “normal,” and natural achievement patterns in their institutions (p. 235). In addition, they argue, “In order to challenge the status quo, major shifts in (1) beliefs, values, and assumptions (dispositions); (2) knowledge (studying and understanding the literature); and (3) skills (how to facilitate and implement what is good for students) will have to take place” (p. 235).

Policy frameworks and theory of action for change. In three different cities, Minneapolis, Seattle and Portland, both the city councils and school boards adopted equity frameworks based on systems theory in order to manage diversity and disrupt the cumulative effects of systemic racism and discrimination. All six examples detail theories

of action for change along with policy framework models to target systemic inequity. All the models developed involve extensive data collection and monitoring to ensure alignment, capacity building, long-term sustainability, and accountability with a focus on disrupting systemic inequities. Focusing on the educational context, I looked at Minneapolis Public School (MPS) District, which highlights its equity framework on its website. The district describes *collective accountability* (Figure 5.2) as the heart of its policy framework (MPS, 2014).



Source: Minneapolis Public School District (2014)

Figure 5.2. Minneapolis Public School District Equity Framework

MPS situates its theory of action for change as the following:

As individuals and as an organization, we’re all accountable for creating educational equity. The framework features three areas of required transformation: Personal, Instructional and Structural. When fully transformed, these areas will help us assume collective accountability for equitable outcomes for both students and staff. Surrounding the accountability triangle are Evidence Based Policy, Program, and Practice; Pedagogy of Equity; Integrated Systems; and Families and Communities as Educational Partners. We believe this framework will build capacity for racial/cultural competency and help us achieve our desired outcomes. Finalizing the framework, developing measurable action steps and implementing those action steps will be done in several phases. (MPS, 2016)

According to MPS’s website, the school board, superintendent, central office and district stakeholders will work collaboratively to “determine specific actions, select individuals

to see those actions through and define measurable outcomes in targeted areas of focus” (MPS, 2016).

Seattle Public Schools (SPS) uses a Racial Equity Analysis Tool and a complementary facilitators guide to ensure fidelity and coherence (2014). According to the district document, it is to be used by educational leaders as an equity lens. The document also states, “This tool kit provides a set of guiding questions to determine if existing and proposed policies, budgetary decisions, programs, professional development and instructional practices are likely to close specific opportunity gaps for specific racial groups in Seattle public schools” (SPS, 2014, p. 1). The document suggests that the tool should be applied to decrease the opportunity gap and increase positive outcomes for students of color.

In June 2011, Portland Public Schools (PPS) adopted a racial educational equity policy, acknowledged race-based disparities within its schools and “identified the district’s role in erasing them” (PPS, 2015). The district also applies an equity lens as a decision-making tool relating to its policy and practices. According to its website, “Applying the Racial Equity Lens to key policies, programs, practices and decisions in core business areas maximizes the user’s ability to ensure equitable outcomes” (PPS, 2015). There are five questions that must be considered for any change or new district policy, practice, program or decision: (1) who are the racial/ethnic groups affected by this policy, program, practice or decisions? And what are the potential impacts on these groups? (2) Does this policy, program, practice or decision ignore or worsen existing disparities or produce other unintended consequences? (3) How have you intentionally involved stakeholders who are also members of the communities affected by this policy,

program, practice or decision? Can you validate your assessments in (1) and (2)? (4) What are the barriers to more equitable outcomes? (e.g. mandated, political, emotional, financial, programmatic or managerial), and (5) How will you (a) mitigate the negative impacts and (b) address the barriers identified above? (PPS, 2015).

These are just three examples of public school districts that demonstrated capacity and collective efficacy in systemic transformation that is foregrounded in equity and social justice.

African American Parent/ Community Participation and Engagement in District: Does Race Really Matter?

Howard and Reynolds (2008), argue that explicit attention to race and class must be examined as two of the primary factors which complicate the roles parents play and the degrees in which they become involved in schools” (p. 95). In dealing with Black parents, there is a need for districts and schools to understand and acknowledge that there are culturally distinct parenting techniques used to navigate perceived barriers that contribute to marginalization of parents and students. One of those parenting techniques includes racial socialization as a necessity for survival within a perceived hostile environment (Wilson, 2009). Jones and Campbell (2011) argue that the cultural psychology of African Americans consists of a “multidimensional response to systemic dehumanization a psychic conflict” (p. 3). With the exception of American Indians, unlike the majority of immigrants who willingly migrated to America with the hope of a better life, Blacks were brought here as slaves and their traditions and language were systematically stripped away as they were reduced to nothing more than personal property. Post slavery, this systematic stripping of humanity continued in various forms

through modern day. To summarize the relationship between Blacks and public education, Carter G. Woodson (1933) argued,

The same educational process which inspires a stimulates the oppressor with the thought that he is everything and has accomplished everything worth while, depresses and crushes at the same time the spark of genius in the Negro by making him feel that his race does not amount to much and never will measure up to the standards of other peoples. The Negro thus educated is a hopeless liability of the race. (Preface, page xiii)

For American Blacks, developing a positive cultural identity is rooted in a knowledge and appreciation of the historical experiences and achievements of Black people in America, which also intersects with a history of racism and oppression across all domains of American life. This is an uncomfortable reminder for many Whites who see this constant reference to America's racial past as a source of racial division. Thus, it is difficult for many policy makers and educators to understand how race and racism intersect in complex ways within the system of public schooling, how both can shape individual identity, behaviors and outcomes of Black students and the engagement of Black parents in both negative and positive ways.

It is common for districts to confuse the differences between parent involvement and parent engagement. The two are not the same and are examples of a continuum of the types of relationships between parents and schools. Ferlazzo and Hammond (2009) posit, "The point of engaging parents in schools is to assist them in developing a harnessing their own energy" (p.2). In parent involvement, schools dictate the relationship and the school's interests drive parents' participation, whereas, with parent engagement, parents' interests drive participation and the relationship is more of a mutual partnership between schools and parents (p. 2). Parent engagement leads to the co-production of knowledge between educators and parents and can also represent a more civic form of democratic

policy making. It appears that the compliance-driven public schools have lost sight of this difference either unintentionally or intentionally, resulting in staff leadership marginalizing parent voice.

In a seminal article, Delpit (1988) discusses the culture of power and the silenced dialogue among Black parents and teachers when discussing the needs of Black students. Some district personnel and participants of the AAAC questioned the role and function of the AAAC in that it served the needs of the district and not that of the population it was intended to serve. In another instance, some parents felt their voices were silenced through a perceived hostile environment created by both informal and formal interactions with school staff. Even individuals who were teachers and had children in the district acknowledged the lack of respect and the tension that existed between them, acting in their parent role, and teachers. In two of interviews with AAAC participants, one parent who was a professional with a master's degree talked about the perceived racial tension whenever she had to interact with school staff. She described her experience as "feeling attacked." She explained that these experiences were key reasons she became involved in the AAAC, hoping that her frequent interaction with school staff and involvement at school would allow staff to get to know her and her children better. She explained that the reason she stopped attending the AAAC meetings was they were no longer meeting her needs, as they were not geared towards African American student specifically, but students in general. One parent, who was also a teacher within SVSD shared,

I've seen what happens, what it looks like when you are a parent that looks like me... I've been on both sides of the fence... and still the same reaction. The same response. The same superiority complex thrown in your face. And, so, I had to put that in perspective so that I wouldn't become bitter.

This individual interpreted Black parents' lack of school participation as a purposeful distancing or an act of resistance.

Central office staff and AAAC participants interviewed acknowledged existing parent surveys had not been disaggregated by race and that no specific survey had been developed with the specific objective of identifying needs of African American parents. In this study, the issue of relevancy, constraints with work schedules, perceived and actual tension between school staff and teachers, were some of the reasons shared for lack of engagement among African American parents.

Limitations

I was clearly aware of the limitations of a single case study and its limitations in generalizing findings, the short length of time in the field, the limited number of SSAs and AAAC participants, and student voice. However, this study was an initial effort to begin the conversations around race, the schooling experiences of Black children, and addressing the knowledge gaps for governance teams in understanding their role in system change that disrupts inequitable delivery systems of education.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The United States, from its early beginnings, has a racialized and class hierarchy that has been institutionalized in many of its major institutions. The Black population has a unique history and experience in public schooling in the United States. The current issues at the forefront are the same as when Woodson (1933) warned of the mis-education of Blacks during the early 20th century and when Myrdal (1944) described the Negro problem. While some relegate America's racial past to another time, Black students and their parents continue to experience its remnants of America's in the form of

microaggressions, pathological stereotypes and racial isolation. Policy makers and educators must recognize and understand the complexity of race and racism as major factors of influence in the identity development and schooling experience of most Black children in public schools.

I now present a historical perspective to counter the notion that we are in a post-racial era. Given the Voting Rights Act of 1964, it has only been 52 years, since Blacks have been allowed to become a part of the electorate in the United States. It has been only 46 years since one of the largest school districts in California was ordered by the LA County Superior court to end operating segregated schools and ordered to integrate (California State University, Northridge, 2013). In 2004, a class action lawsuit was settled on behalf of poor students and students of color, *Williams v. State of California*, because state and local districts failed to provide equal access to qualified teachers, instructional materials, and safe facilities (CDE, 2015).

Since the implementation of California's LCFF, many of the district's policy and central office actors agree that the accountability plan required by the state to guide district spending has forced districts to focus more on areas considered implicit best practices but not necessarily politically or financially expedient areas of district focus. On its website, the CDE declares:

Ensuring equity in education is a necessary component in narrowing the achievement gap. Teachers and school leaders ensure equity by recognizing, respecting, and attending to the diverse strengths and challenges of the students they serve. High-quality schools are able to differentiate instruction, services, and resource distribution to respond effectively to the diverse needs of their students, with the aim of ensuring that *all* students are able to learn and thrive. (CDE, 2015)

This declaration must become foundational knowledge for every school board elected or appointed to a public school board. The CSBA has made efforts to build the capacity of

school board members through governance trainings, conferences and publications. For those who elect to access its trainings or information, school board members are trained to understand the difference between governance and political action and the value of each in maintaining and advocating for a strong public education. However, the organization is silent in addressing the remnants of America's racialized and class-based hierarchy within the public education system, which replicates disparate outcomes of society at large. As the cumulative effects affect generations and entire communities, these outcomes are normalized and predictable for specific student groups.

It is important for board members to understand the visible and invisible barriers in place within their institutions (i.e., board policies, resource allocation, instructional and discipline practices, staff and parent interaction, and school-home communication) that may restrict access and opportunity for many students of color and their parents (Council of Great City Schools, 2012; Toldson, 2011). When looking particularly at Black students, research focused on how these practices hinder their connectedness and performance and reinforce negative self-images and the school's inability to support them in deconstructing those images (Okeke, Howard, Kurtz-Costes, & Rowley, 2009, p. 381).

Charged with the authority to create the conditions for schools to be successful in educating America's children, school board leaders must build capacity and improve efficacy with the purpose of disrupting and eliminating inequitable systems within their districts. It is my hope that the national and state focus on educational equity is not the new flavor of the month in educational reform. CSBA has the opportunity to leverage the theory of action of California's new funding formula and accountability system, with its focus on student equity, to build of school board members' capacity in the areas of

systems thinking, racial literacy and cultural proficiency within the contexts of public education. As we develop new policies of practice, not only should the goal be to create school environments that affirm and support Black students and parents while reinforcing the need for school boards and superintendents, as the governance team, to develop critical self-reflective practices and collective efficacy to disrupt systemic inequities.

Conclusion

The false assumptions that schools are neutral from societal politics and injustices, and that we live in a post-racial society, blind many educators to the schooling experiences of African American students and the adults who advocate on their behalf. As much as it denies both historical and current day experiences of African American students, colorblindness rejects the unique cultural heritage of Black people, which is tied to America's legacy of slavery and systemic racial discrimination, whether intentional or not.

The goal of this study was to contribute to the research on K-12 school board governance by sharing research in the educational and leadership domains of higher education, school board associations, and local governance teams that acknowledge Black students' social experience of race and how it affects student identity and performance outcomes. This research acknowledges Black students' social experiences of race within current ideological structures of colorblindness, meritocracy and deficit thinking and the ways in which these structures affect student identity and performance outcomes for this population.

Recommendations for District, CSBA and Future Research

Building Board and Central Office Capacity and Efficacy in Culturally Proficient and Responsive Systemic Change

With limited capacity at the levels of both knowledge and skill, SVSD appears to develop some systems of internal monitoring as part of its reform efforts. However, very little emphasis is focused on building capacity among local school board members whose responsibility, along with the superintendent, is to set the direction for the district and create the conditions for student achievement. Adams (2006) claims that school board governance is about a purpose more than process and argues that districts “can not be redesigned without the active leadership of school boards” (p. 1). Though SVSD is evolving in terms of understanding system-wide transformational change and of the issue of equity and its impact on student learners and their families, it is imperative that the school board, in collaboration with the superintendent, focus their understanding and skills development to create and sustain a culturally responsive system of schooling that leaves no student, parent or community in the margins.

Empower and Build the Capacity of District Level AAAC to Support the Growth and Sustainability of Site-level AAACs.

First and foremost, the district needs to focus on building the capacity of educators to work with Black parents in a way that facilitates mutual respect, communication across cultures and addresses inequity in power. Currently, deficit views such as parents not valuing education and being hostile towards staff have become barriers to Black parents’ connectedness with schools. The district needs to identify its role in perpetuating non-welcoming environments that marginalize and pathologize Black

parents through both inaction and actions. Many participants interviewed measured the district's legitimacy in supporting the work of the district-level AAAC by comparing what the group did not have in relation to the district's resource allocation for English language learners and both district-level and site-based ELACs. As part of the district's efforts to initiate system transformation and create equitable systems, the district needs to include all aspects of its actions, including the role of parent advisories in that effort and equitably align the necessary resources and support to empower these groups to carry out their roles.

Future Research

This research was conceptualized out of a problem of practice of local public school board members in fulfilling the promise of facilitating democracy and creating the conditions to provide a high-quality education for all of our nation's children. The findings exposed gaps in knowledge and skills among both school board members and COAs in terms of the ways in which district and school structures, processes and practices intersect and reproduce forms of oppression that cause distributive injustices among ascriptive groups.

Future research should focus on longitudinal case studies of school boards demonstrating capacity and efficacy in system-thinking skills with a focus on creating the conditions to facilitate and sustain equitable systems of schooling like PPS, SPS, and MPS do. Questions to explore might include the process these governance teams use to facilitate understanding of the issues of equity and system-level thinking and the level of support they receive from school board associations and state legislators to develop and sustain these policy frameworks, if any. In addition, research might investigate how they

manage external and internal influences and pressures and the outcome of implementation from the perspective of students of color and the adults who advocate on their behalf.

An additional area of research to consider is exploring best practices of districts working successfully and collaboratively with African American parent and community groups to improving Black children's educational outcomes. As we develop new policies of practice, the goal should be to create school environments that not only affirm and support Black students, but also reinforce the need for critical self-reflective practices that build local school boards' cultural proficiency and collective efficacy.

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Appendix A

Sky View SD Suspension, Expulsion, and Truancy Report for 2011-12

**Suspension, Expulsion, and Truancy Report for 2011-12
48900(k) Defiance Suspension and Expulsion**

All Students

Ethnicity	Defiance Suspensions (In School)	Defiance Suspensions (Out School)	Other Suspensions (In School)	Other Suspensions (Out School)	Total Suspensions	Defiance Expulsions	Other Expulsions	Total Expulsions
Hispanic Or Latino Of Any Race	15	229	10	497	751	0	12	12
African American, Not Hispanic	22	703	30	1,260	2,015	0	7	7
White, Not Hispanic	3	125	1	225	354	0	1	1

Special Education Students

Ethnicity	Defiance Suspensions (In School)	Defiance Suspensions (Out School)	Other Suspensions (In School)	Other Suspensions (Out School)	Total Suspensions	Defiance Expulsions	Other Expulsions	Total Expulsions
Hispanic Or Latino Of Any Race	0	36	1	91	128	0	0	0
African American, Not Hispanic	0	101	3	226	330	0	1	1
White, Not Hispanic	0	33	0	55	88	0	0	0

Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students

Ethnicity	Defiance Suspensions (In School)	Defiance Suspensions (Out School)	Other Suspensions (In School)	Other Suspensions (Out School)	Total Suspensions	Defiance Expulsions	Other Expulsions	Total Expulsions
Hispanic Or Latino Of Any Race	13	178	10	432	633	0	11	11
African American, Not Hispanic	21	566	27	1,057	1,671	0	6	6
White, Not Hispanic	3	85	1	163	252	0	1	1

Source: CDE, Data Quest 2011-12 Suspension and Expulsion Report

Appendix B

Two-Year Summary of Sky View Suspension and Expulsions by Ethnicity and Code

Violation

Two Year Summary

District 2013/2014

Ed. Code Violation 48900	American Indian		Asian		Pacific Islander		Filipino		Hispanic		African American		White	
	Susp	Exp	Susp	Exp	Susp	Exp	Susp	Exp	Susp	Exp	Susp	Exp	Susp	Exp
A1	10	1	0	0	2	0	2	0	309	5	1214	19	191	1
A2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
B	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	3	27	5	3	0
C	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	30	20	18	9	10	4
D	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	1	0	0	2	0	0	0
E	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
F	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	31	0	9	0
G	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	16	1	64	1	10	0
H	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	17	0	2	0	2	0
I	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	0	109	0	18	0
J	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	0	0
K	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	115	0	451	0	71	0
L	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
M	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
R	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	14	2	1	0
T	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	14	1	3	0
0.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
TOTALS	16	3	1	0	3	0	10	1	533	29	1950	38	319	5

Total Expulsions 76
Total Suspensions 2832

District 2014/2015

Ed. Code Violation 48900	American Indian		Asian		Pacific Islander		Filipino		Hispanic		African American		White	
	Susp	Exp	Susp	Exp	Susp	Exp	Susp	Exp	Susp	Exp	Susp	Exp	Susp	Exp
A1	9	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	314	6	1010	27	145	1
A2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
B	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	30	1	24	2	9	1
C	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	33	9	25	1	3	1
D	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
E	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0
F	0	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	13	0	19	2	6	0
G	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	18	3	42	4	6	0
H	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	9	0	2	0
I	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	18	0	59	0	3	0
J	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	7	0	1	0
K	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	83	0	197	0	28	0
L	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	2	0	0
M	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
R	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	0	1	0
T	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	0	10	1	3	0
0.4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
TOTALS	11	0	6	0	3	0	7	0	527	21	1414	40	207	3

Total Expulsions 64
Total Suspensions 2175

Source: Sky View School District (2015)

Appendix C

Sky View SD Special Education by Enrollment and Disability

**Special Education Enrollment by Ethnicity and Disability
Reporting Cycle: December 1, 2012**

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Mental Retardation</u> (MR)	<u>Speech or Language Impairment</u> (SLI)	<u>Other Health Impairment</u> (OHI)	<u>Specific Learning Disability</u> (SLD)	<u>Autism</u> (AUT)
Hispanic	50	203	49	227	86
African-American	38	102	72	265	55
White	14	70	40	59	35
1,561					

Reporting Cycle: December 1, 2011

<u>Ethnicity</u>	(MR)	(SLI)	(OHI)	(SLD)	(AUT)
Hispanic	53	172	35	229	67
African-American	35	96	61	245	43
White	17	70	36	63	31
1,439					

Reporting Cycle: December 1, 2010

<u>Ethnicity</u>	(MR)	(SLI)	(OHI)	(SLD)	(AUT)
Hispanic	48	152	32	212	58
African-American	31	104	49	252	38
White	21	70	30	58	26
1,389					

Reporting Cycle: December 1, 2009

<u>Ethnicity</u>	(MR)	(SLI)	(OHI)	(SLD)	(AUT)
Hispanic	56	150	30	231	53
African-American	45	111	54	299	36
White	22	81	33	90	29
1,495					

Reporting Cycle: December 1, 2008

<u>Ethnicity</u>	(MR)	(SLI)	(OHI)	(SLD)	(AUT)
Hispanic	55	174	32	232	41
African-American	43	118	50	298	27
White	25	107	22	97	33
1,529					

Source: CDE, Special Education Division, Dataquest, 2013

Appendix D

Document Summary Form

Document Summary Form

Name or type of document:

Document No:

Date Received:

Date of Document:

Event or Contact With Which Document is Associated:

- Descriptive
- Evaluative
- Other _____

Page#

Keywords/Concepts

Comments: Relationship to

Research Questions

Brief Summary of Contents:

Significance or Purpose of Document:

Is There Anything Contradictory About Document?

- Yes
- No

Salient Questions/Issues to Consider:

Additional Comments/Reflections/Issues:

Appendix E

Theory Driven Codes

<p>Structural Domain (6 codes) Institutional Structures Organizes marginalization and oppression through practices</p> <p><u>SDRP: Racism is produced</u> -Board Policy: <u>SDRP-BP</u> -Surveillance/Compliance: <u>SDRP-S/C</u> (i.e. demonstrated by what they know or understand) -Board Policy/Actions driving racial patterns: <u>SDRP-BP/A</u> (i.e. zero tolerance, merit, standardized testing) -lack of diversity in classroom and school site principals</p> <p><u>SDRR: Racism is resisted</u> -Board Policy/Actions: <u>SDRR-BP/A</u> (i.e. explicit mention of equity in policy or action, created and funded Chief Academic Officer of Equity and student outcomes)</p>	<p>Cultural Domain (7 codes) Ideas and ideologies Justifies it</p> <p><u>CDRP: Racism is produce</u> - Denying racism exists due to limited understanding -Board Knowledge/Beliefs: <u>CDRP-BN/B</u> -Central Office knowledge/Beliefs: <u>CDRP-COK/B</u> -Central Office Actions: <u>CDRP-COA</u> -Admin knowledge/Beliefs: <u>CDRP-A/N/B</u> -Admin Actions: <u>CDRP-A/A</u></p> <p><u>CDRR: Racism is resisted</u> -Implicit/explicit actions acknowledging racism within the organizational culture -Board Non-Policy Actions: <u>CDRR-BNPA</u></p>
<p>DOMAIN OF POWER FRAMEWORK (Racism as a system of power)</p>	
<p>Disciplinary Domain (4 codes) Organizational practices Use of Rules to uphold racial hierarchy or challenge it</p> <p><u>DDRP: Racism is produced</u> -Surveillance/Compliance: <u>DDRP/S/C</u> (oversight and mgmt. of AAAC, staff practical interpretation of zero tolerance policy) -How racial hierarchies are upheld (i.e. use of categorical funds, zero tolerance in discipline, use of test scores to determine course placement and criteria for program participation, process for referral to Special Education)</p> <p><u>DDRR: Racism is resisted</u> -Formal: <u>DDRR/F</u> – Requiring a minimum level of electives at all middle schools, facilitating the growth of site level AAAC</p>	<p>Interpersonal Domain (3 codes) Relationships and communities</p> <p><u>IDRP: Racism is produced</u> -Denying Racism exists (i.e. colorblindness "I don't see color" "...we're focused on all students"): <u>IDRP-DRE</u></p> <p><u>IDRR: Racism is resisted</u> -Explicit language acknowledging racism on an interpersonal level</p>

Appendix F

Data-Driven Coding

Data-Driven Coding

(Connect these codes to main nodes (What is the context/relationship to theory nodes if any?))

1. Equity
2. Colorblindness
3. Deficit thinking
4. Minoritizing colorblind practices (i.e. the term “subgroup” “at risk”)
5. Making assumptions
6. Disproportionality
7. Discipline
8. Accessibility- under-representation
9. Parent engagement/involvement
10. Trust- Climate
11. Trust- Interpersonal
12. Distrust-Climate (i.e. the institution of school)
13. Distrust- Interpersonal
14. Respect- Climate (i.e. the institution)
15. Respect- Interpersonal
16. Disrespect- Climate
17. Disrespect- Interpersonal
18. Driven by Compliance- “That’s what we are required to do” “school funding attached to specific actions”
19. Driven by Surveillance
20. Align resources- resources follow affirmations
21. Board Member skills/knowledge-Governance knowledge gap: Do board members understand their governance role
22. Student engagement
23. Student connectedness
24. Parent connectedness
25. Parent disconnect
26. Student outcomes- products of unintentional/purposeful efforts or actions
27. LCAP
28. PBIS (Positive Behavior Instruction & Support)
29. CRPBIS (Culturally Responsive Positive Behavior Instruction & Support)
30. Culturally Responsive
31. Reference to data
32. Responding to data
33. De-emphasize Black identity-The phrase “All students” mentioned after reference to AA students to avoid appearing exclusionary or prejudiced
34. Racial ethnic identity
35. Awareness of Racism
36. Achievement gap

37. At risk students / subgroups
38. Awareness/acknowledged racism
39. Embedded assumptions of inferiority

Appendix G

School Board Interview Protocols

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE (School Board) INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Timing:

Step 1-Greeting

Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is Linda K. Jones. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Before we begin the interview session, I'd like to give you the opportunity to read and sign the Consent to Participate in Research.

Purpose

As we discussed over the phone, this interview is a one-on-one interview intended to collect information for a research study, which explores how school board governance teams understand, identify challenges and respond to the phenomenon of racial disproportionality and academic disparity among African American/Black students in PK-8 public school districts. During this interview, we will talk about your experiences both as an individual and collective member of a local governance team, or [institutional district actor such as central office staff, site administrator or advisory committee member].

Confidentiality:

Informed consent:

This consent notice summarizes some information from the Consent to Participate in Research and communicates the procedures, potential risks and discomforts for participants, potential benefits to participants, payment to participants for participation, participation and withdrawal, and rights of research participants. Procedures in this interview are limited to semi-structured personal interview sessions. Because the study deals with issues that are sensitive, some interview questions may involve issues of a personal nature. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these interview questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study. You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. Interview participants will not be paid for their participation in this interview. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for answering, or not answering, any question in any way. You may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time and/or may leave the interview at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind. You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without interview. You can halt your participation in the interview at any time. You are not waiving legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this interview.

If you have any concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Research and Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or call (818) 677-2901.

Today's interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. Are there any questions before I get started?

I. Interview Session Main Questions:

1. How long have you served on the board?
2. What is your highest level of educational achievement?
3. What is your age range? (<55) or (>55)?
4. What is your background? If in education, in what capacity?
5. What encouraged you to run for the school board?
6. What is your educational philosophy as a school board member?
7. According to your website:

Mission of the Sky View District is to provide a relevant, high quality education within an inclusive and culturally respectful environment, preparing all students for personal and professional success.

 - a. What is the relationship between your district's mission statement and the programs it operates on a daily basis?
8. How do you think school board members can influence student outcomes?
9. How do you as a board member stay informed of issues impacting student subgroups as it relates to implementation of federal and state policies and procedures?
 - a. Have you read any books, attended workshops or conferences?
 - b. How do you share that information with your governance team and the public?
10. What theory of action or policy framework does your board use to guide its efforts relating to student diversity and outcomes?
 - a. How long has this been in place?
 - b. How do you monitor your progress?
11. Please define the following words: Diversity, disproportionality, and equity. Are any of these measured and monitored in your district? If so how?

- a. What is the frequency?
 - b. How is the information used to guide policy and administrative actions?
12. Prior to LCFF, how did the district manage student diversity and equity as it relates to its policies and district practices?
13. Please describe the issues or concerns related to student diversity, achievement and equity most often discussed over the last five years by the board, central office, and among your principals (in that order but relevant to participant's role in the district)?
14. In the last 5 years, what has been the most important action(s) your board has taken to improve the above areas? What is the significance of this action and its impact on student outcomes?
15. Is it difficult for the governance team to discuss racial issues at the policy level when addressing the needs of your diverse student body? If yes, why? If not, explain your answer.
 - a. How are racial and or ethnic issues addressed with teachers, administrators and support staff as it relates to instructional delivery and school climate?
16. What has been the schooling experience of Black students as a subgroup for the last six [NCLB implementation] years in this district?
17. Can you identify 3 key challenges relating to access and/or student outcomes for Black students within your district?
18. How does the district assess the patterns or distinct needs of this specific subgroup in your district?
 - a. How has the board monitored student outcomes for this group?
 - b. How has that data guided your decision-making?
 - c. What actions has the board taken to address issues identified?
19. Has the board discussed and/or evaluated the districts institutional practices, rules or looked at structures in how classes and programs are organized at different school sites?
20. How has Federal and State policy impacted the District's ability to respond to the needs of Black students within your district?

21. How have employee bargaining units, parent and community groups helped to improve or have made these challenges more difficult in addressing the needs of this student population?
22. What is the purpose of the African American Action District Advisory committee and what role does it play as an advisory to the district?
23. How will the district gauge its success for improving outcomes for Black students?

Closing Questions:

I would like to give you a final opportunity to help me examine these issues. Before I end today, is there anything that I missed? Do you have anything else to add at this time? Have you said everything that you wanted to say but didn't get a chance to say? Have you shared everything that is significant about these experiences with me? If there's anything else that you recall after our interview session, I invite you to share it by contacting me.

Post-Interview Session: Debriefing and Closing

Thank you for participating in today's interview session. I greatly appreciate you taking the time and sharing your ideas with me. I also want to restate that what you have shared with me is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifiable characteristics will be used in any report or document. Within 1-2 weeks, you will receive a call to set up an appointment copy of the transcript from this interview by way of email at which time you will have the opportunity to review add, delete or clarify for accuracy.

Finally, I want to provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you might have about this interview. Do you have any questions at this time?

Appendix H

Superintendent Interview Protocol

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE (Superintendent) INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Timing:

Step 1-Greeting

Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is Linda K. Jones. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Before we begin the interview session, I'd like to give you the opportunity to read and sign the Consent to Participate in Research.

Purpose

As we discussed over the phone, this interview is a one-on-one interview intended to collect information for a research study, which explores how school board governance teams understand, identify challenges and respond to the phenomenon of racial disproportionality and academic disparity among African American/Black students in PK-8 public school districts. During this interview, we will talk about your experiences both as an individual and collective member of a local governance team, or [institutional district actor such as central office staff, site administrator or advisory committee member].

Confidentiality:

Informed consent:

This consent notice summarizes some information from the Consent to Participate in Research and communicates the procedures, potential risks and discomforts for participants, potential benefits to participants, payment to participants for participation, participation and withdrawal, and rights of research participants. Procedures in this interview are limited to semi-structured personal interview sessions. Because the study deals with issues that are sensitive, some interview questions may involve issues of a personal nature. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these interview questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study. You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. Interview participants will not be paid for their participation in this interview. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for answering, or not answering, any question in any way. You may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time and/or may leave the interview at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind. You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without interview. You can halt your participation in the interview at any time. You are not waiving legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this interview.

Identification and contact information of principal investigator:

If you have any concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Research and Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or call (818) 677-2901.

Today's interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. Are there any questions before I get started?

I. Interview Session Main Questions:

1. How long have (had) you worked in this district in your current capacity as Superintendent?
 - a. Have you worked in other capacities with this same district? If so, for how long and what were each of those roles?
2. What has been the student achievement trend in your district over the last five years and what trends do you expect in the next three years?
3. What is your personal educational philosophy relating to student diversity, achievement and equity, you believe is important as an educational leader?
 - a. Are these issues of concern in this district? If so, be can you explain?
4. Prior to LCFF, what theory of action or policy framework does your governance team use to guide its efforts relating to student diversity and outcomes?
 - a. How long has this been in place?
 - b. How do you monitor your progress?
 - c. How has LCFF impacted that TOA?
5. In the last five years, how has the district gauged the climate and culture of the district as it relates to student achievement and diversity?
6. How do you stay informed of emerging patterns and/or issues impacting subgroups or non-traditional groups within district schools as it relates to district policies and procedures?
 - a. How do you share that information with the governance team and district staff?
7. Please describe the topics or issues related to student diversity, achievement and equity most often discussed by your board, central office, and among your principals (in that order) over the last five years?

8. In the last 5 years, what has been the most important action(s) your board has taken to improve the above areas?
9. Is it difficult to discuss racial issues among the board, central office and school site staff when addressing the needs of your diverse student body? If yes, why? If not, explain your answer.
10. What has been the schooling experience of Black students as a subgroup relating to achievement, over and under-representation for the last six years in this district?
 - a. If not addressed in any of the above questions ask: Can you identify 3 key challenges relating to student outcomes for Black students within your district?
11. How has Federal and State policy accountability impacted the district's ability to respond to the needs of Black students?
12. What role has employee bargaining units; parent and community groups helped to improve or have made these challenges more difficult in addressing the needs of this student population?
13. What is the purpose of the African American Action District Advisory committee and what role does it play as an advisory to the district?
14. How does the district use this committee to inform its decisions and guide its practices?
15. How has the board monitored student outcomes for African American/Black students? If using data, explain what type and then also ask: How has that data guided the district's response?
 - a. What actions has the board taken to address stated issues?
16. What challenges has the district had in addressing issues relating to this group of students?
 - a. What policy is in place as a direct outcome of district data that address the specific needs of this subgroup in your district?
17. How does the district gauge its success for improving outcomes for Black students?

Closing Questions:

I would like to give you a final opportunity to help me examine these issues. Before I end today, is there anything that I missed? Do you have anything else to add at this time? Have you said everything that you wanted to say but didn't get a chance to say? Have you shared everything that is significant about these experiences with me? If there's anything else that you recall after our interview session, I invite you to share it by contacting me.

Post-Interview Session: Debriefing and Closing

Thank you for participating in today's interview session. I greatly appreciate you taking the time and sharing your ideas with me. I also want to restate that what you have shared with me is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifiable characteristics will be used in any report or document. Within 1-2 weeks, you will receive a call to set up an appointment copy of the transcript from this interview by way of email at which time you will have the opportunity to review add, delete or clarify for accuracy.

Finally, I want to provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you might have about this interview. Do you have any questions at this time?

Appendix I

Central Office and Principal Administrator Interview Protocols

(Central Office and Principal Interview Protocol)

Timing:

Step 1-Greeting

Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is Linda K. Jones. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Before we begin the interview session, I'd like to give you the opportunity to read and sign the Consent to Participate in Research.

Purpose

As we discussed over the phone, this interview is a one-on-one interview intended to collect information for a research study, which explores how school board governance teams understand, identify challenges and respond to the phenomenon of racial disproportionality and academic disparity among African American/Black students in PK-8 public school districts. During this interview, we will talk about your experiences both as an individual and collective member of a local governance team, or [institutional district actor such as central office staff, site administrator or advisory committee member].

Confidentiality:

Informed consent:

This consent notice summarizes some information from the Consent to Participate in Research and communicates the procedures, potential risks and discomforts for participants, potential benefits to participants, payment to participants for participation, participation and withdrawal, and rights of research participants. Procedures in this interview are limited to semi-structured personal interview sessions. Because the study deals with issues that are sensitive, some interview questions may involve issues of a personal nature. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these interview questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study. You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. Interview participants will not be paid for their participation in this interview. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for answering, or not answering, any question in any way. You may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time and/or may leave the interview at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind. You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without interview. You can halt your participation in the interview at any time. You are not waiving legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this interview.

Identification and contact information of principal investigator:

If you have any concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Research and

Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or call (818) 677-2901.

Today's interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. Are there any questions before I get started?

Interview Session Main Questions:

18. What is your current role in the district?
19. How long have you worked in this district in your current capacity?
 - a. Have you worked in other capacities with this same district? If so, for how long and what were each of those roles?
20. In the last five years, what has been the three most significant trends related to student outcomes in your district?
21. How do you define diversity, disproportionality, and equity (ask each separately)
 - a. In the last five years, have any of these constructs been measured and/or monitored in your school, at the district level? If so, do you know how often?
 - b. How is that information used at your site, at the district level?
22. Prior to LCFF, how did the district manage student diversity and equity as it relates to its policies and district practices?
 - a. Is there a theory of action for change or a policy framework in place that guides district decision-making? If so, what?
23. How do you stay informed of emerging patterns and/or issues impacting subgroups or non-traditional groups within district schools (your school) as it relates to district goals, policies and procedures?
 - a. How do you share that information with the governance team and/or central office staff, and instructional (site admins, teachers and support staff) staff?
24. Please describe the issues or concerns related to student diversity, achievement and equity most often discussed over the last five years by the board, central office, and among your principals (in that order but relevant to participant's role in the district)?

25. In the last 5 years, what has been the most important action(s) your board has taken to improve the above areas? What is the significance of this action and its impact on student outcomes?
26. Is it difficult to discuss racial issues among district leadership and school site staff when addressing the needs of your diverse student body? If yes, why? If not, explain your answer.
27. What has been the schooling experience of African American/Black students as a subgroup relating to achievement, and over and under-representation for the last five years in this district?
 - a. If not addressed in any of the above questions ask: Can you identify 3 key challenges relating to access and student outcomes for this group of students within your district?
28. How has Federal and State policy accountability impacted the district's ability to respond to the needs of Black students?
29. What is the purpose of the African American Action District Advisory committee and what role does it play as an advisory to the district?
30. What role has employee bargaining units, parent and community groups helped to improve or have made these challenges more difficult in addressing the needs of this student population?
31. How has the board monitored student outcomes for this group? If using data, explain what type and then also ask: How has that data guided the district's response?
 - a. What actions has the board taken to address stated issues?
17. What challenges has the district had in addressing issues relating to this group of students?
 - a. What policy is in place as a direct outcome of district data that address the specific needs of this subgroup in your district?
18. How does the district gauge its success for improving outcomes for Black students?

Closing Questions:

I would like to give you a final opportunity to help me examine these issues. Before I end today, is there anything that I missed? Do you have anything else to add at this time?

Have you said everything that you wanted to say but didn't get a chance to say? Have you shared everything that is significant about these experiences with me? If there's anything else that you recall after our interview session, I invite you to share it by contacting me.

Post-Interview Session: Debriefing and Closing

Thank you for participating in today's interview session. I greatly appreciate you taking the time and sharing your ideas with me. I also want to restate that what you have shared with me is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifiable characteristics will be used in any report or document. Within 1-2 weeks, you will receive a call to set up an appointment copy of the transcript from this interview by way of email at which time you will have the opportunity to review add, delete or clarify for accuracy.

Finally, I want to provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you might have about this interview. Do you have any questions at this time?

Appendix J

African American Action Committee Interview Protocol

(African American Action Committee) INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Timing:

Step 1-Greeting

Good morning/afternoon/evening. My name is Linda K. Jones. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. Before we begin the interview session, I'd like to give you the opportunity to read and sign the Consent to Participate in Research.

Purpose

As we discussed over the phone, this interview is a one-on-one interview intended to collect information for a research study, which explores how school board governance teams understand, identify challenges and respond to the phenomenon of racial disproportionality and academic disparity among African American/Black students in PK-8 public school districts. During this interview, we will talk about your experiences both as an individual and collective member of a local governance team, or [institutional district actor such as central office staff, site administrator or advisory committee member].

Confidentiality:

Informed consent:

This consent notice summarizes some information from the Consent to Participate in Research and communicates the procedures, potential risks and discomforts for participants, potential benefits to participants, payment to participants for participation, participation and withdrawal, and rights of research participants. Procedures in this interview are limited to semi-structured personal interview sessions. Because the study deals with issues that are sensitive, some interview questions may involve issues of a personal nature. You may feel uneasy about answering some of these interview questions. You may elect not to answer any of the questions with which you feel uneasy and still remain as a participant in the study. You may not benefit personally from your participation in this study. Interview participants will not be paid for their participation in this interview. You are not obligated whatsoever to answer or respond to any question or to discuss anything that you are not inclined to answer or discuss. You can skip any question, or any part of any question, and will not face any penalty for answering, or not answering, any question in any way. You may ask that the audio recording be stopped at any time and/or may leave the interview at any time for any reason without consequences of any kind. You may withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation without interview. You can halt your participation in the interview at any time. You are not waiving legal claims, rights, or remedies because of your participation in this interview.

Identification and contact information of principal investigator:

If you have any concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Research and Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or call (818) 677-2901.

Today's interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes. Are there any questions before I get started?

30. Interview Session Main Questions:

1. What is your occupation?
2. What is your highest level of educational achievement?
3. Do you have any children in the district?
4. What is your background and history with this district?
5. How long have you served on the AAAC? What contributed to your decision to serve on the AAAC?
6. What is the purpose and role of the AAAC?
7. Does the district partner with other community organizations to support the needs of African American/Black students? If yes, who? If no, what do you think are the reasons?
8. How do you define disproportionality, diversity and equity (ask each separately).
 - a. Are any of these measured and monitored in your district? If so, do you know how often?
 - b. How is that information used?
9. How does the district use this committee to inform its decisions and guide its practices?
10. What type of information does the district share with this advisory relating to the status of African American/Black students schooling experiences and outcomes in this district?
11. What has been the schooling experience of Black students as a subgroup relating to achievement, over and under-representation for the last six years in this district?
12. Is it difficult to discuss issues relating to race within the district?

13. How does the district address racial issues impacting student access and outcomes?
14. Can you identify 3 key challenges relating to access and student outcomes for Black students within your district?
15. How are racial and or ethnic issues addressed with teachers, administrators and support staff as it relates to instructional delivery and school climate?
16. What outreach approach does the district use to communicate to parents and guardians of African American students? Is this a different approach used with other parent groups?
17. How have employee bargaining units, parent and community groups helped to improve or have made these challenges more difficult in addressing the needs of this student population?
18. What policy is in place as a direct outcome of district data to address the distinct needs of the Black student subgroup in your district?
19. How would you gauge the district's progress in addressing the needs of African American/Black students?

Post-Interview Session: Debriefing and Closing

Thank you for participating in today's interview session. I greatly appreciate you taking the time and sharing your ideas with me. I also want to restate that what you have shared with me is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifiable characteristics will be used in any report or document. Within 1-2 weeks, you will receive a call to set up an appointment copy of the transcript from this interview by way of email at which time you will have the opportunity to review add, delete or clarify for accuracy.

Finally, I want to provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you might have about this interview. Do you have any questions at this time?