University of San Diego
Digital USD

Dissertations | Theses and Dissertations

2024-1

Examining systemic and dispositional factors impacting historically disenfranchised schools across North Carolina

Raketa Ouedraogo-Thomas
University of San Diego, raketao@sandiego.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digital.sandiego.edu/dissertations

Part of the Critical and Cultural Studies Commons, Educational Leadership Commons, Education Policy Commons, Inequality and Stratification Commons, and the Social Justice Commons

Digital USD Citation

Ouedraogo-Thomas, Raketa, "Examining systemic and dispositional factors impacting historically disenfranchised schools across North Carolina" (2024). *Dissertations*. 1002.
https://digital.sandiego.edu/dissertations/1002

This Dissertation: Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Digital USD. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital USD. For more information, please contact digital@sandiego.edu.

EXAMINING SYSTEMIC AND DISPOSITIONAL FACTORS IMPACTING HISTORICALLY DISENFRANCHISED SCHOOLS ACROSS NORTH CAROLINA

by

Raketa A. Ouedraogo-Thomas

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the Requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

December 2023

Dissertation Committee

Sarina C. Molina, EdD, Chair
Elizabeth Butler, PhD, Member
Joi Spencer, PhD, Member

University of San Diego

© Copyright by Raketa A. Ouedraogo-Thomas
All Rights Reserved 2023

University of San Diego
School of Leadership and Education Sciences

CANDIDATE'S NAME: Raketa Alyce Ouedraogo-Thomas

TITLE OF DISSERTATION: EXAMINING SYSTEMIC AND DISPOSITIONAL FACTORS IMPACTING HISTORICALLY DISENFRANCHISED SCHOOLS ACROSS NORTH CAROLINA

APPROVAL:

_____, Chair
Sarina Molina, EdD

_____, Member
Elizabeth Butler, PhD

_____, Member
Joi Spencer, PhD

DATE:

ABSTRACT

This mixed method sequential explanatory study provided analysis of North Carolina (NC) school leaders' dispositions in eliminating opportunity gaps, outlined in NC's strategic plan. The study's quantitative phase used descriptive and correlation analysis of eight Likert subscales around four tenets of transformative leadership (Shields, 2011) and aspects of critical race theory (Bell, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2006) to understand systemic inequities and leadership attitudes.

The qualitative phase comprised three analyses of education leadership dispositions and systemic factors in NC schools. The first analysis of State Board of Education meeting minutes from 2018–2023 quantified and analyzed utterances of racism and critical race, outlined the sociopolitical context of such utterances, and identified systemic patterns and state leader dispositions. The second analysis of five interviews of K–12 graduates identified persistent and systemic factors influencing NC education 3 decades after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and within the context of *Leandro v. State of NC* (1997), where the NC Supreme Court recognized the state constitutional right for every student to access a "sound basic education." The final qualitative analysis consisted of five interviews of current NC public school system leaders, for personal narratives of the state of NC schools compared to patterns from lived experiences of NC K–12 graduates.

The study's findings suggested NC school and state education leaders experience a racialized dichotomy between willingness for change (equity intentions) and execution of transformative action (practice). Although leaders at the board and school levels recognize the need for inclusivity and equity, a struggle to transcend systemic challenges, especially rooted in racial biases and power dynamics is evident. This study may identify leadership qualities needed

for change in NC to address systemic inequities for improving educational access and inform policy to uphold all students' constitutional right to a sound, basic education.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Anita Ouedraogo. I have been blessed by and have thrived under your love and care. I am grateful for the time we have existed in the same space together. To my husband Brian, who has listened, soothed, and supported me throughout my graduate educational journey. You are my rock, my friend, and my partner. To my children, Elias and Ethan, whom I love very deeply. You bring me joy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my mentor and committee members, Drs. Spencer, Butler, and Molina. Also, thank you to my advisor, Dr. Lathan, and my seminar professor, Dr. Lalas, for your support and encouragement throughout this dissertation writing process. I am grateful to my SOLES allies; your wisdom, guidance, and knowledge have helped to make this possible. I would like to acknowledge my family—my husband, my children, my parents, and my siblings—who supported me and have been my biggest cheerleaders and sometimes thought partners, in this journey. I am grateful to my critical friends, Michelle, Myeshia, and Hannah. I would like to acknowledge my Carver High School family, Heartful editors Suzanne and Michael, as well as other friends and colleagues.

ORDER OF PAGES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS vii

LIST OF TABLES xiv

LIST OF FIGURES xvii

CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY 1

Background 2

Educational Equity 2

Leandro v. State 3

Problem Statement 7

Addressing Inequities and Critical Race Theory 9

On CRT 11

Purpose of the Study 13

Neoliberalism and Cultural Hegemony 14

Systemic and Dispositional Factors 17

Research Questions 18

Methodological Rationale and Nature of the Study 19

Significance of the Study 21

Positionality 22

Definitions of Terms 23

Summary and Organization 27

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW 29

Knowledge Capital 32

Cultural Hegemony and Neoliberalism in the Hidden Curriculum 32

Knowledge Hierarchies 33
Mattering 35
Humanizing Education 36
Humanizing Anti-Blackness 37
Schooling Links to Human Experience 38
Inevitable Inequities 39
Changing Inequity 40
Social Justice Lens 42
Humanizing Organizational Change 42
Equitable Humanistic Leadership for Change 43
Ushering in Change 44
The Human Factor to Change 45
Organizational Readiness 45
Lewin's Change Model 46
Summary 50
CHAPTER 2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW: HISTORICAL CONNECTION 51
A History of Systemic Oppression 51
Impact of Slave Trades 53
Discomforts of Acts Against Inequities in a Racialized Environment 55
CHAPTER 2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW: A HISTORY OF SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION 57
A History of NC Public Education 57
Lived Experiences of Education in NC 65
Lived Experience Example 1 67

Lived Experiences Examples 2 and 3 69

Lived Experience Example 4 71

Current Events for Education in NC 73

Black Classmates Auctioned as Slaves 73

Disagreements During a Local Board Review of Policy and Practice 74

Summary 75

CHAPTER 2.3 A HUMANIZING CRITICAL RACE FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP CHANGE 77

Critical Race Theory Research Studies 77

Unwanted Identities as Barriers to Policy Implementation 78

Theoretical Foundation 80

CRT 82

TLT 91

Synthesis of Frameworks 98

Summary 101

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY 102

Overview 102

Feldhoff and Radisch's Research 104

Methodology of Like Research 105

Case Study as a Research Design 109

Methodology and Data Collected 110

Research Participants 112

Survey Participants 113

Interview Participants 115

Modifications to the Research 116
Instruments 116
The Survey 116
Interviews 125
Procedures of Data Collection 129
Procedures of Data Analysis 132
The Survey 132
The Document Analysis 133
The Interviews 137
Validity and Reliability 138
Assumptions 139
Limitations of the Research Methodology 139
Delimitations of the Research Methodology 140
Summary 141
CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS 142
Purpose of Research Study 142
Research Methodology and Interview Questions 143
Research Questions 144
Chapter Synopsis 150
Monitoring NC Progress 151
CHAPTER 4.1 QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS 154
Originating Reliability Results of the Survey 154
Survey Participant Demographics 157

Survey Subscale Results 161
Subscale Analysis 163
Quantitative Findings and Discussion for Research Question 1 and 3 194
Quantitative Findings and Discussion for Research Question 2 and 3 203
Overall Quantitative Findings 204
Quantitative Phase Summary 209
CHAPTER 4.2 QUALITATIVE FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS 213
Document Analysis 213
Utterances of Racism 214
Internal Response and External Pressure to Utterances of Critical Race 223
Interviews 229
Lived Experiences Interviews 229
Education Leader Interviews 247
Overall Quantitative and Qualitative Findings 268
CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS 271
Summary of the Study 272
Existing Dispositional Factors Influencing NC Leaders 274
Existing Systemic Factors Influencing NC Leaders 275
Overall Themes and Conclusions 276
Strategic Policy Recommendations 277
Discussion 279
The Inevitability of Inequality 283
Dominance, Social Justice, and Factors Impacting Schooling 287

Transformative Characteristics 291

Transformation Is not Culture Neutral 294

Implications 295

Atkinson and Leandro 297

Johnson and Leandro 298

Catherine Truitt and Leandro 298

Current Status of Leandro 299

Summary 300

Recommendations for Practice 301

Recommendations for Future Research 302

Conclusions 303

REFERENCES 304

APPENDIX A NC State Board of Education 2025 Statewide Strategic Plan 2019–2025 358

APPENDIX B Goal I Through III of NC State Board of Education 2025 Statewide Strategic Plan and *Leandro* Comprehensive Remedial Plan Adopted by NC in 2019 360

APPENDIX C Sample of Educational Articles and Research With Topics Similar to Research Study 361

APPENDIX D Permission Status of Survey Questions Used From Other Research 363

APPENDIX E Figures Related to Document Analysis 368

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. NC State Constitution, Excerpts on the Public Education of Students 4

Table 2. NC SBE Goals and Corresponding Measures 8

Table 3. Literature Reviewed Using CRT as a Framework 77

Table 4. Literature Reviewed Using TLT as a Framework 93

Table 5. Core Components of Transformative Leadership Adapted From Shields (2010) 95

Table 6. Research Question Subcategories and Details 107

Table 7. Visualization of Sample Sizes Across Quantitative and Qualitative Phases of the Study 113

Table 8. Reliability of Surveys Used From Other Research 117

Table 9. Research and Survey Questions Alignment 120

Table 10. Sample of Survey Questions and Alignment to TLT 121

Table 11. Phases of the Mixed-Methods Sequential Explanatory Design and Procedures 130

Table 12. Document Analysis Codes Initially Created and Defined Based on Transformative Learning Theory Tenets 134

Table 13. Composition of the Survey 144

Table 14. Factors That Align Across CRT, TLT, and the Humanizing Framework 145

Table 15. Components and Data Tools for Research Question 1 146

Table 16. Components and Data Tools For Research Question 2 148

Table 17. Components and Data Tools for Research Questions 3 and 4 150

Table 18. Individual Measures for NC State Board of Education Goals 152

Table 20. Original Use and Reliability of Surveys Used From Other Research 155

Table 21. Participant Race 158

Table 22. Percentage of Participants From Each Region 161

Table 23. Skewness of Survey Subscale Items 162

Table 24. Spearman's Rho Correlations for Q19 163

Table 25. Agreement Percentage for Willingness Subscale (Q19) 166

Table 26. Spearman's Rho Correlations for Q20 167

Table 27. Agreement Percentage for Educational Supports Subscale (Q20) 170

Table 28. Spearman's Rho Correlations for Q21 174

Table 29. Agreement Percentage for Dedication to Equitable Change Subscale (Q21) 176

Table 30. Spearman's Rho Correlations for Q22 178

Table 31. Agreement Percentage for Distributions of Power Subscale (Q22) 180

Table 32. Agreement Percentage for the Democratization of Schooling Subscale (Q23) 182

Table 33. Spearman's Rho Correlations for Q23 183

Table 34. Agreement Percentage for Capability Subscale (Q24) 186

Table 35. Spearman's Rho Correlations for Q24 186

Table 36. Agreement Percentage for the Pervasiveness of Racism Subscale (Q25) 187

Table 37. Spearman's Rho Correlations (Q25) 189

Table 38. Agreement Percentage for Racialized School Transformation Subscale (Q26) 191

Table 39. Spearman's Rho Correlations (Q26) 193

Table 40. Agreement Percentages by Race of Item Q21d 199

Table 41. Agreement Percentages by Race of Item Q22d 200

Table 42. Spearman's Rho Correlations Among Significant and Correlated Items 205

Table 43. Subscale and Research Question Alignment Tool 209

Table 44. Breakdown of the Survey Items, Subscales or Categories 211

Table 45. Frequency of NC State Board Meetings 214

Table 46. Sample Comments from SBE Meeting Minutes 219

Table 47. Example of Public Comments to ARP ESSER State Plan 226

Table 48. Demographics of Participants - Lived Experiences 230

Table 49. Demographics of Participants - Education Leadership 248

Table 50. Characteristics Within This Study of Transformative Dispositions 249

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Leandro Timeline 1994–2021 6

Figure 2. Theories, Framework, and Overarching Methodologies of Literature Reviewed 31

Figure 3. Stages to Lewin's System Level Model for Change (Hussain et al., 2018) 47

Figure 4. Racial Demographics of Persons Living in NC 84

Figure 5. NC Children Ages 0–17 Versus All NC People in Poverty 89

Figure 6. Poverty Levels of NC Children Ages 0–17 89

Figure 7. Critical Educational Change Model 99

Figure 8. Critical Change Receptivity: A Case for Readiness 99

Figure 9. LP School Ratio Change From 2018–2019 Data to 2021–2022 Data 103

Figure 10. Percent Display of Methodologies Used in Study-Related Research Topics 106

Figure 11. Data Collected for the Research 111

Figure 12. Google Ads Impressions of Survey Advertisement 115

Figure 13. Demographics of Valid Survey Respondents 157

Figure 14. School Types 159

Figure 15. NC SBE Region Locations of the Participant Pool 160

Figure 16. Correlations Across the Willingness Subscale (Q19) 165

Figure 17. Extremely Significant and Correlated Relationships in Q20 169

Figure 18. Extremely Significant and Correlated Relationships in Q21 173

Figure 19. Extremely Significant and Correlated Relationships in Q22 179

Figure 20. Significant and Correlated Relationships in Q23 185

Figure 21. Extremely Significant and Correlated Relationships in Q25 190

Figure 22. Frequency of Observations and Interventions to Racist Acts by NC leaders 192

Figure 23. Significant and Correlated Relationships in Q26 194

Figure 24. Visual of 2019–2022 Racial Gaps Between Teachers and Students in NC Schools 198

Figure 25. 2021–2022 Racial Gaps Between Teachers and Students in NC Schools 198

Figure 26. Visualization of Relationships for Subscales (Q19, Q21, Q22, and Q23) 202

Figure 27. Significant Inter Subscales with Correlation Coefficients Greater Than 0.5 207

Figure 28. Utterances of Racism Within SBE Meeting Minutes Over Time 216

Figure 29. Utterances and Their Influences 217

Figure 30 Monthly Frequency of Utterances of Racism in 2020–2022 218

Figure 31. 2016–2023 Political Affiliations of NC Supreme Court, Legislature, and Superintendent Office 295

The opposition to Negro education in the South was at first bitter, and showed itself in ashes, insult, and blood; for the South believed an educated Negro to be a dangerous Negro. And the South was not wholly wrong; for education among all kinds of men always has had, and always will have, an element of danger and revolution, of dissatisfaction and discontent. Nevertheless, men strive to know.

−W.E.B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk*

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Two years after announcing Operation Polaris and upon the heels of Polaris 2.0, North Carolina (NC) Superintendent Catherine Truitt received the inaugural Champion for Leaders Award from the NC Principal Advisory Committee (NCPAC) for [transforming] the landscape for the support of principals (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI], 2023). Operation Polaris is an action plan and vision for the NCDPI. At the behest of the NC State Board of Education (SBE) and the superintendent, NCDPI is the implementation branch for NC's public-school laws and policies for prekindergarten through 12th grade (PK–12) public schools. The award was to commemorate the implementation of initiatives and policies outlined by the Office of Learning Recovery and Acceleration (OLR), a research and data-driven decision-making framework initiated by Truitt in 2021 to support NC schools, staff, and students in collaboration with the Office of District and Regional Support (DRS). Truitt was praised for "[amplifying] the importance of principals as true change agents in schools" for the award (NCDPI, 2021a). NC school leaders may be empowered to be change agents. More specifically, existing NC policies and initiatives may impact school and student improvement in NC PK–12 public schools. Further study requires examination into current public laws, policies, and initiatives in place related to school leaders in NC.

This chapter presents an overview of a research study on barriers and facilitators to transformational leadership in the context of *Leandro v. The State of NC* (1997) along with public policies and initiatives affecting the impact of school leadership in NC schools. This chapter highlights the background, problem statement, research questions, significance, and the purpose of the study. This chapter also presents the theoretical framework of the study, which

was based on aspects of transformational leadership theory (Shields, 2011) and critical race theory (Bell, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2006).

Background

Educational Equity

In the 2025 Strategic Plan, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2019) defined equity as "the belief and practice of ensuring that every student is treated in a fair and just manner, providing the necessary allocation of resources for the success of every student, and eliminating discriminatory barriers . . . for every student" (p. 1) in its SBE strategic action plan framework. According to this definition, educational equity in NC consists of three parts: (a) belief and practice, (b) morality and impartiality, and (c) distribution and prevention. These are equal parts dispositional affect including belief, morality, and impartiality and action including practice, distribution, and prevention. Other definitions equate equity in education to a force for fairness, and meeting students' needs through collective action (Hatch et al., 2020; Jurado de Los Santos et al., 2020). Beyond budgetary allocation and teacher allotment, equity seeks equal opportunities in access for all (Jurado de Los Santos et al., 2020).

In education, equity is exhibited through academic quality to eliminate the inequality gap (Pinot Ade Moira et al., 2020). Educational equity favors transformation and collective efforts and is promoted through various measures. These measures include educational resources, financial student support, measures to address diversity, cultural and organizational organization, and the promotion of educational leadership based on equity and social justice (Echeita, 2019; Pinot de Moira et al., 2020). Factors promoting equity are influenced by politics. For example, public law and policies can create oppressive practices creating dysfunction, chaos, and inequity within educational institutions (Anyon, 2006). A mandate for equity and the moral courage to

apply it are dispositional factors applying to a school leader focused on equity (Shields, 2011). Power analysis helps to address exclusionary policies, and power building communities and collaboration provide solutions to educational inequity (Anyon, 2006).

Leandro v. State

Leandro v. The State of NC (1997), also referenced in this paper as *Leandro v. State* or *Leandro*, was a landmark court case highlighting the need for educational equity in NC. The case mandated every child in NC has a constitutional right to a sound basic education. However, the state has struggled with eliminating opportunity gaps and providing equal educational opportunities for all students. The aim of the study was to identify the leadership dispositions and systemic factors hindering educational equity in NC.

In 1994, five economically challenged districts (i.e., Cumberland, Hoke, Robeson, Vance, Halifax counties) and Robert A. Leandro, a student in the Hoke County Schools and his mother as initial plaintiffs, filed a case within a NC Superior Court Division. Plaintiffs claimed the state's school funding system failed to provide adequate educational opportunities to students. In a landmark decision, the NC Supreme Court indicated NC must act to correct its constitutional failure to secure sound and basic educational opportunities for every child in its public schools (*Leandro v. State*, 1997). It was concluded according to Article I, Section 15 and Article IX, Section 2 as displayed in Table 1. The NC Constitution guarantees every child equal opportunity for education.

Table 1

NC State Constitution, Excerpts on the Public Education of Students

Location	Section title	Text
Article I, Section 15	Education	The **people have a right to the privilege of education**, and it is the duty of the State to guard and maintain that right.
Article IX, Section 2	Uniform system of schools	(1) General and uniform system: term. The General Assembly shall provide by taxation and otherwise for **a general and uniform system of free public schools**, which shall be maintained at least 9 months in every year, and **wherein equal opportunities shall be provided for all students**. (2) Local responsibility. The General Assembly may assign to units of local government such responsibility for the financial support of the free public schools as it may deem appropriate. The governing boards of units of local government with financial responsibility for public education may use local revenues to add to or supplement any public school or postsecondary school program.

In 2002, the courts ruled the state violated the rights of students by not providing sound and basic education and in 2004, a lower court upheld this decision in *Hoke County Board of Education v. State (2004)*, commonly referred to as *Leandro II*. To address equitable opportunities in education for all students, the plaintiffs of *Leandro v. State* requested an independent review outlining the depth and breadth of this violation along with recommendations to solve it.

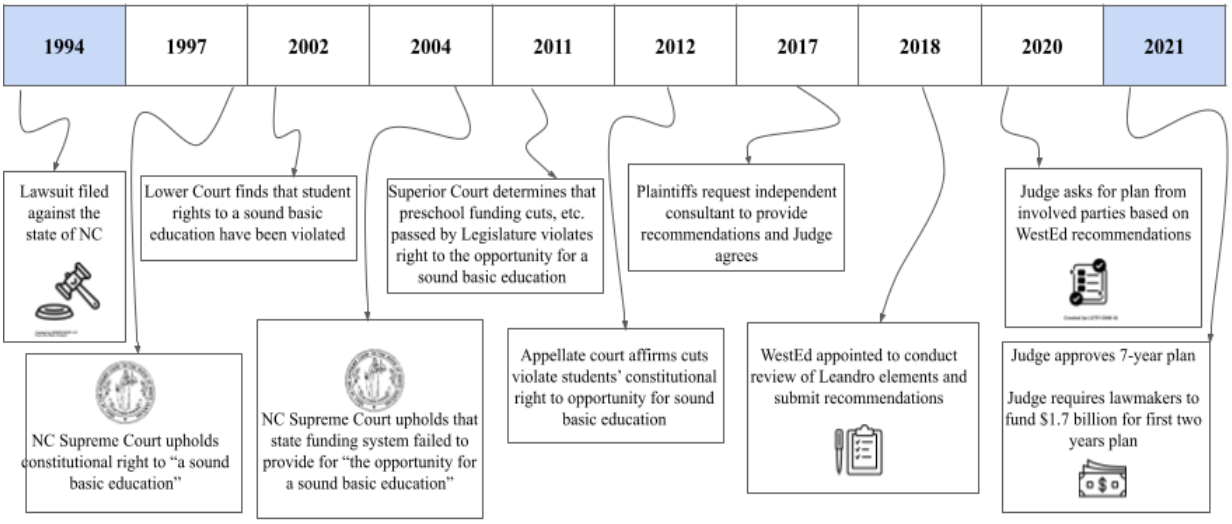
In 2017, Governor Cooper established a commission on access to a sound basic education, which helped to return the case to public attention. Then, in 2018, after taking over from retired judge Manning who presided over *Leandro* for 19 years, Judge Lee appointed WestEd as an independent consultant to bring visibility to the case. In collaboration with the Learning Policy Institute, and the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at NC State University, WestEd (2019) released a report outlining needs and recommendations for the state

of NC. The report stated “considerable work” remained (Granados, 2019, p. 2) to be done to achieve success for students in NC. A *January 2020 Consent Order* (Lee, 2020) was filed stating irrespective of its attempts over the years to address the educational needs of students living in high poverty, the state of NC has continued to fail to provide every child, specifically students in what they describe as attending *high poverty* schools, with a sound, basic education. Such schools include a large demographic of economically disadvantaged students (EDS). The criteria to be designated EDS are based on household size and income. NCDPI defined an EDS by eligibility for free and reduced lunch under the National School Lunch Program (Leeson et al., 2018).

In the summer of 2021, Judge Lee signed an order to implement a comprehensive remedial plan pursuant to the *January 2020 Consent Order* and the *September 2020 Order* to meet the state’s constitutional obligation to provide the opportunity for a sound, basic education to all the state’s students. In November 2021, “every reasonable deference” (Granados, 2021, para. 11) was made for the legislative and executive branches to approve the budget funding the plan, Judge Lee ordered the state to pursue all necessary measures to fund the next 2 years of the plan (Hui, 2021). Figure 1 provides a general timeline of *Leandro* from 1994 when the lawsuit was first filed, to 2021, when Judge Lee requires lawmakers to fund a state board approved comprehensive remedial plan.

Figure 1

Leandro Timeline 1994–2021



By 2022, the General Assembly argued Judge Lee had no authority to order lawmakers to fund the plan. Judge Lee's decision was blocked and an amicus brief outlining precedent in favor of Lee's decision was filed. NC Supreme Court Chief Justice Paul Newby, then replaced Lee from *Leandro* with Judge Robinson, citing Lee had reached retirement age. By November 2022, a 4–3 party-line ruling from the Democrat-led Supreme Court determined a trial judge could order the state to spend additional money on education. This decision ordered the legislature to fund 2 years of the *Leandro* plan, but with a new judge, there was a review of Lee's order and of the budget with the $1.7 billion allocation readjusted to less than 50% of its original amount. Around this time, the state had an unreserved funding surplus of over $9 billion. Although defendants have continued to make *Leandro* an issue of funding allocations, plaintiffs have maintained the case concerns a constitutional right and opportunity for all students to have a sound and basic education.

At the start of 2023, a new Republican-led Supreme Court (5–2 party-line decision) halted the funding transfer, making this the fourth decision by the NC Supreme Court regarding *Leandro*. After Judge Robinson requested to be removed from the case, Superior Court Judge Ammons of Cumberland County was assigned as the new trial court judge to *Leandro*. The future of this case remains unsure.

Problem Statement

Despite the state's efforts to remove opportunity gaps through the implementation of *Leandro* policies and practices, there are still significant disparities in educational outcomes based on race and socioeconomic status. The opportunity gap (Irvine, 2010; Milner, 2012) between students from low-income families and their affluent peers has continued to persist, and minority students are disproportionately affected. The current study investigated leadership dispositions and systemic factors impacting educational equity in NC.

Although NC underwent a period of educational growth and transformation in the 1980s and 1990s (Oakes et al., 2019), this success was short-lived as the 2008 recession in the United States occurred, public opinion around educational spending changed, and the state's leadership priorities shifted. The social and economic disruptions catalyzed by the recession resulted in financial and legislative cutbacks. These cutbacks "undermined" (Oakes et al., 2019, p. 14) the gains made by NC. In the absence of funding, favor, and access, student achievement suffered and within the first year of the COVID-19 global pandemic, it continued to do so.

With *Leandro* and the WestEd report (Oakes et al., 2019), the state of NC acknowledged the existence of educational inequities in public PK–12 schools. NC has outlined three goals to resolve it. Table 2 provides a list of these goals and the measures identified by the SBE published in a live dashboard on the state website, to monitor and track each goal. As depicted in Table 2,

the first goal was to “eliminate opportunity gaps by 2025” (North Carolina State Board of Education, 2019, p. 3). All three goals were later updated to a 2027 deadline during a 2023 SBE meeting.

Table 2

NC SBE Goals and Corresponding Measures

Goals	Measures
Goal I: Eliminate opportunity gaps by 2025	● Discipline: ○ In-school suspensions (short term and long term) ● % 4-year-old children enrolled in PK ● Kindergarten student readiness ● High school dropout rate ● Average composite score on ACT ● ACCESS readiness (for EL students) ● Chronic absenteeism ● % students in early postsecondary opportunities ○ AP, IB, dual enrollment ● % economically disadvantaged students in charter schools
Goal II: Improve school and district performance by 2025	● % Grades 3–8 math and ELA scores meeting federal yearly measures of interim progress ○ math ○ ELA ● % students proficient in math ● % students proficient in reading by the end of 3rd grade ● % high school reading scores meeting federal yearly measures of interim progress ● % students proficient in science
Goal III: Increase educator preparedness to meet the needs of every student by 2025	● Teacher mobility ● Teacher effectiveness ● Beginning and provisional teachers

The SBE wrote opportunity gaps are “defined by the disparity in access to quality schools and resources needed for all children to be successful” (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2019, p. 4). The second goal was to “improve school and district performance by 2025” (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2019, p. 4) and the third was to

"increase educator preparedness to meet the needs of all students" (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2019, p. 5). Each of the three goals outlined a set of actionable objectives the SBE plans to monitor. The goal, objectives, and subsequent objective components updated as of 2023 are provided in Appendix A. To achieve equity and to meet these goals, the state had the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) implement district and regional supports. This was primarily to schools identified as low-performing (LP) and with a notable number of students in high poverty, also identified by the state as economically disadvantaged students (EDS).

Events from *Leandro* and school funding concerns have been widely researched, but factors impacting inequities (systemic or dispositional) in NC and shared from the perspective of school leaders have been minimally researched. Most widely explored are factors of funding, poverty, and student achievement. An analysis of the state's progress on eliminating opportunity gaps through an examination of systemic and dispositional factors within schools designated as LP, is nonexistent. A NC SBE Strategic Plan and *Leandro* Alignment (2021) document (see Appendix B), as well as a live NC Strategic Dashboard Monitoring Tool posted during the 2021–2022 school year and approved by the SBE measuring and identifying metrics from state accountability tracked (2018–2020) and posted on the DPI site 4 of 7 objectives under Goal 1: Eliminate Opportunity Gaps by 2025 (see Table 1).

Addressing Inequities and Critical Race Theory

The theoretical framework of this study was based on critical race theory (CRT), which highlights the ways in which racism is embedded in legal and social systems. CRT provided a lens for understanding how institutional policies and practices can perpetuate inequity and marginalization. Using CRT, this study examined the systemic factors and leadership dispositions impacting educational equity in NC.

In the video, *The Common school: 1770-1890* (2005), the narrator indicated that Thomas Jefferson, a founding father and primary author of the declaration of independence, and Horace Mann, an educator who spearheaded universal public school education in the United States, ascribed to the notion that nobility is nonexistent in the United States. The narrator shared that a prevailing belief of Jefferson and Mann was that "every citizen is equal", and with education, the "son of the poorest man in the country . . . may become president" (*The Common school: 1770-1890*, 2005).

What was not addressed was that Jefferson's meritocratic views were not meant for Black bodies. Blacks were seen as "libidinous" (Takaki, 1993/2012, p. 68), and possessing of an inferiority "fixed in nature" (Takaki, 1993/2012, pp. 64). The inferiority was in reference to skin color, physical symmetry, hair, and reason that if mixed with White bodies "threatened "racial purity"" and degraded 'love of country, love of excellence, and human character' (Takaki, 1993/2012, p. 68). Thus, for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), the United States has historically been a nation of enslavement, indentured servitude, exclusion, and removal (Anderson, 1988/2010; Noguera, 2003; Noguera et al., 2015; Walton & Caliendo, 2020). A continued passivity and proclivity for racism was elevated across the country under *Plessy v Ferguson* (1896), a legal decision permitting southern Whites to use violence and law to disenfranchise Blacks (Bell, 1995; Bonilla-Silva & Ashe, 2014; Lewis, 2004; Marable, 1984; Nieto & Bode, 2012).

The United States is a nation of civil and racial unrest, hate crimes and protests sparked during the COVID-19 global pandemic by the public murder of George Floyd by the hands of a White police officer. The promise of Jefferson and Mann's dreams established the United States as a meritocracy, a country in which, regardless of race, class, or gender, a person armed with a

good education has a fair chance to obtain the highest level of democratic success. However, the historical experience of minorities in the United States suggests meritocracy is a myth.

On CRT

I based this paper on the foundational framework of CRT. CRT challenges claims of meritocracy, neutrality, and objectivism. CRT connects historical tensions and intersections between race, property rights, and human rights as facilitators to school inequities (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). As a theory, CRT affirms the existence and prevalence of racism in U.S. culture and organizations (Bell, 1980; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, 2017, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; D. G. Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) and attempts to make sense of the world by identifying and transforming existing systemic aspects maintaining inequity (D. G. Solórzano, 1997). A CRT perspective applied in the educational context seeks to emancipate students of color from the biases and unjust constructs of race and racial conditions (Delgado, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016).

In its original context of critical legal studies, CRT maintains inherent social biases in the legal system account for continued racial inequities in the United States (López & Sleeter, 2023). A CRT lens applied to education calls for an intentional examination of the role racism has in sustaining racial inequalities. These inequalities pose barriers to providing an equitable education and access to opportunities for all students (Bell, 1980; 1995; Delgado & Stefanic, 2017; López & Sleeter, 2023). As such, CRT-inspired solutions call out injustices, the transformation of factors maintaining inequity, and calls for a reinterpretation of laws and policies, including those meant to remove barriers like civil rights law (Delgado & Stefanic, 1994; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Although a CRT position respects civil rights accomplishments like *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), strategic flaws in such landmark cases have done little to desegregate

education (Crenshaw, 1988; Delgado, 1991; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995)[1]. In using euphemisms for race and racism such as "urban schools" or "high poverty schools," and identifying barriers like access and funding, *Leandro* connected the central propositions of school and social inequity (i.e., race as a factor to inequity, tensions between property and human rights in U.S. society, and intersections of race and property) identified by Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995), to NC's educational equity gaps in property-poor or low-resource communities.

Endeavoring to eliminate opportunity gaps begins with the premise racism is "endemic" to the U.S. "social fabric" (Milner, 2007, p. 391). If race and racism are factors to inequity, then a society or system maintaining structures of racism, discrimination, and oppression is inevitably inequitable. In applying a CRT lens to the NC's educational policies and practices, the first step is examining policies and practices including those amplifying school leadership supports or landmark cases like *Leandro v. State of NC* (1997) and *Hoke County v. State of NC* (2004), also referred to in this paper as *Leandro* (or *Leandro I*) *and Leandro II*.

An examination of opportunity gaps in education begins with an investigation of existing systemic factors (e.g., racist structures, resource allocation, professional learning supports) impacting schools and a concurrent exploration of reciprocity (e.g., skill, will, public consent) as categorized by the dispositional attributes of the leaders who make decisions and create policy on behalf of students. Investigations address the contributions of systemic and dispositional factors within traditional public PK–12 schools in NC to inequities formed by race, class, and gender in schools (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Education for Black people in the South and education in NC for example, has experienced a history of inequities. Assuming systemic oppression, discriminatory barriers, and educational debt are products of a society that maintains inequity

[1] Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) write "today [post Brown], students of color are more segregated than ever before" (p. 55).

(Ladson-Billings, 2006) then opportunity gaps in NC are reinforced by racism and within schools, by an absence of equity.

NC's history of inequity has affected its capability to be fair, to provide necessary allocation of resources, to eliminate discriminatory barriers, and to provide opportunities for its most vulnerable students to receive a sound and basic education, and as a result, has created opportunity gaps. Vulnerable in this context pertains to students belonging to subgroups and racial groups typically overrepresented in LP schools. Words like vulnerable, marginalized, and excluded are used interchangeably throughout this paper. In NC, these words (i.e., vulnerable, marginalized, excluded) is most often Black students (Nordstrom & Tillitski, 2021).

Purpose of the Study

Encumbrances to systemic change have plagued educational advancement (e.g., achievement across all student subgroups within the United States) and are not limited to NC. The failure of schools to provide educational equity to communities where "poor people are concentrated and employment is scarce" has been "pervasive" and "endemic" across the nation (Noguera, 2003, p. 3). Though schools should offer multiple ways for students to actualize, the reality is many schools do not offer flexibility (J. Spencer, personal communication, October 19, 2021). This study attempted to address the barriers and facilitators to educational equity in NC, specifically to closing opportunity gaps by:

- Reviewing historical data of schools in NC,
- Surveying school leadership personnel in NC,
- Examining state leadership through the document analysis of SBE meeting minutes,
- Capturing the lived experiences of persons having experienced schooling in the state, and

- Interviewing a sample of school leadership across the state.

My goal was to identify change receptivity, (i.e., dispositions [Fortner et al., 2021], knowledge, capability, and willingness) and systemic factors, influencing educational leaders in their attempts to address student needs and to effectuate change in NC.

Neoliberalism and Cultural Hegemony

Education reform and improvement in the South has historically been perceived as a "negro problem" (Manufacturer's Record, 1904, p. 46). School reform was considered a ploy by the North to meddle in southern affairs (Anderson, 1988/2010). Education and the money to support reform movements for school improvement was reduced to being a "subversive scheme to achieve social equality for the region's Black citizens" (Anderson, 1988/2010, p. 95) and characterized as poor relief (i.e., financing for the weak). Accepting school reform and the associated funding was equivalent to "the loss of manliness and strength of character" (Anderson, 1988/2010, p. 95). These racialized origins of school reform in the South are steeped in neoliberal ideology and cultural hegemony.

Neoliberalism was developed by economic conservatives claiming society flourishes most when its economy thrives under competitive markets (Harvey, 2005; López & Sleeter, 2023). As in education, neoliberal ideology refers to the reduction of public goods and services in favor of a privatized free market (Hursh, 2007). Neoliberal efforts in education favor school choice, high stakes testing, and accountability practices (Brathwaite, 2017; Hursh, 2007). Hegemonies gain power by making their ideology a natural rule or norm (Foucault, 1972/1980; Hall & Gieben, 1992). Cultural hegemony is steeped in consent, coercion, and dominion, concerned with politics and power (Gramsci, 1971/2020; Lears, 1985), and constructed by dominant class forces to exert dominant cultural norms and values on those with less power

(Artz & Murphy, 2000; Stoddart, 2007). Over generations, hegemonies transmit ideology through institutions like the education complex (Foucault, 1972/1980; Gramsci, 1971/2020). Together, neoliberal ideology and cultural hegemony sustain existing racial inequalities. Attempts to decontextualize school reform and improvement in the South is a false attempt to deracialize or to neutralize the effects of racism in public schooling. It divorces context from reality and stonewalls social justice efforts due to an inability to "critically understand the role of race and racism in the larger social order" (López, 2003, p. 77).

Anyon (2006) shared, "barriers to systemic, sustainable school quality" (p. 70) are economic and political in nature. Equity reforms are impacted by interest convergence (Anyon, 2005; Bell; 1992, 2018; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Flores, 2018; Milner, 2007; Oakes et al., 2006) and diminished by the resistance of dominant groups who hold power (Anyon, 2006) and fear its loss. Disrupting privileges for the more powerful requires an alteration to the politics of educational policymaking (Oakes et al., 2006). If NC is not on a trajectory to eliminate opportunities and continues to violate students' rights to a sound and basic education, then it is reasonable hegemonic opposition outweighs resistance. The mutual exclusivity that exists between eliminating opportunity gaps and violating students' rights to education suggests NC does not exhibit a readiness or receptivity for educational change. If all conditions remain by 2027, then the educational complex will continue to perpetuate inequity and discriminatory barriers in schools. There is value in identifying factors promoting equity and refute injustice across schools, namely those supporting communities with the highest opportunity needs.

From a CRT perspective, factors needed for policies and practices in NC to support educational equity include the presence of public interest and public consent followed by meaningful change to existing oppressive economic structures. Hence the approach to measure

change readiness or receptivity in school leaders of schools designated as LP as a potential research line of inquiry to NC's problem of opportunity gaps. Readiness for change may be measured through change receptivity. *Change receptivity* is defined by the capability to bring about organizational change (Frahm & Brown, 2007) by acting as a measure to determine how willing a person or group is to change (Frahm & Brown, 2007; Pettigrew et al., 2001).

Traditionally, attitude and willingness affect receptivity for change (Waugh & Punch, 1987). Diverse types of consent exist including informed, active, and implied. The types involve overarching components such as permission, knowledge, or participation. A sociological exploration of interest touches on affect and motivation (Swedberg, 2005). I argue receptivity for systemic educational change at the school, district, or state level must include willingness, attitudes, and knowledge and capability. I defined *critical change receptivity* as composed of a willingness for change, attitudes facilitating change, and capacity for change, knowledge, and capability. The absence of any of these components makes organizations vulnerable to maintaining inequitable systems. Another assumption is readiness for educational change equates to the presence of critical change receptivity. With *Leandro*, NC state leaders know NC has historically operated inequitably in supporting schools, and therefore, understand a change must occur for this to change. The state's capacity to address its historical inequities through an exploration of critical change receptivity and from a CRT lens is yet to be examined.

In this study, I was interested in identifying the readiness level of school leaders of LP schools in NC, for change. NC Statute, G.S. 115C-105.37(a1), requires the creation and review of school or district improvement plans from all schools or districts designated as LP by the SBE; therefore, change efforts in NC, including efforts to eliminate opportunity gaps, are connected to improvement efforts. Though a specific look into the original five districts from

Leandro v. State of NC (1997) would benefit from this research, the original *Leandro* districts do not only house LP schools. The study benefits from casting a wider net for feedback from principals across the state through a survey to measure dispositions. Interviews of at least one school leader of recurring LP (R-LP) schools from within three to five counties exhibiting the state's highest child poverty rates follow the survey. These interviews provide a deeper dive into aspects of change receptivity (i.e., willingness, attitude, capability, knowledge).

Systemic and Dispositional Factors

At its core, this study sought to identify the state's potential in meeting Goal 1—eliminate opportunity gaps by 2025 of the SBE strategic plan, by examining change receptivity at the school level. Measures included dispositional and systemic factors for achieving educational equity and school improvement.

Dispositional factors have been identified as an amalgamation of components of change receptivity (Frahm & Brown, 2007; Pettigrew et al., 2001) and dispositional domains developed from transformative leadership theory (Fortner et al., 2021; Shields, 2011). Dispositional factors as barriers or facilitators of educational equity are as follows:

- A knowledge of educational equity and systemic factors contributing to educational equity,
- A capability–through resources (i.e., a diversity of personnel, flexibility and availability of funding, instructional and professional learning), or authority (power)–to implement initiatives addressing inequities in schools, and
- A willingness to pursue social justice aligned dispositional domains (Fortner et al., 2021; Shields, 2019, 2020)
    - Dedicated to equitable change

    - Addressing inequitable distributions of power
    - Arguing for democracy through voice
    - Finding balance and affecting change, and
- The attitudinal presence of the stated domains as interpersonal dispositions

For the purposes of this study, systemic factors manifested educational inequity in public PK–12 schools as identified by Noguera (2003) and Scheetz and Senge (2016) and aligned to CRT's stance on the salience of racism in the United States (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997). These factors include:

- Persistence of racism as a norm (or racially motivated norms),
- The absence of educational supports (both affective and material), and
- Insufficient resource allocation.

Research Questions

The research questions addressing school progress toward educational equity and leadership change receptivity were:

1. What dispositional factors appear as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in NC? To what extent are the dispositional factors racialized?
2. What systemic factors appear as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in NC? To what extent are the systemic factors racialized?
3. What themes emerge from listening to the voices of leaders of LP schools that relate to dispositional and systemic factors?
4. From the research findings, what strategic policy recommendations emerge to enhance NC's progress toward educational transformation?

Methodological Rationale and Nature of the Study

The research questions were best addressed using a mixed methods design. A mixed methods design identified a qualitative and a quantitative strand (Creswell & Clark, 2017) permitting the analysis of measures and characteristics (Gay et al., 2009) of systemic and dispositional factors affecting LP schools. My goal was to measure school leadership receptivity for change, captured via survey, along with the lived experiences of school leaders of R-LP schools.

Access to school leaders in NC schools was feasible because I have worked in NC schools and currently worked for the state at the time of this study, but my background may have been a deterrent for some during the interview selection and request process. With respect to measuring systemic factors, the identification of schools as LP; their education supports including school improvement support, teacher to student racial and economic composition, school plans for improvement, leadership retention; resource and funding allocations; and their impact are best described through quantitative means. Components of such data were publicly available online and distributed by the state of NC. For example, the state's school performance dashboard provided information including school and district-specific financial allocations, teacher experience and access to student advanced classes. The requirement for a monitoring panel relaying progress of state efforts to the public, one of WestEd's (2019) recommendations, offered a unique opportunity for further quantitative data analysis, making this strand of a mixed methods approach feasible.

Ideology is a set or system of ideals that "grips the minds of the masses" (Hall, 1996, p. 26). Ideological hegemony is when these ideals dominate others and are reinforced (Entwistle, 2009; Foucault, 1972/1980; Sallach, 1974). Based on the *Leandro* decision, the state violated the

rights of students by not providing the opportunity for a basic and sound education. This suggests, over time, the NC system of education reinforced to the masses a sound and basic education is a right only meant for a privileged few, not the population of students typically overrepresented in LP and high poverty schools. Groups that defined this system of education before *Leandro* were those within communities of high performance and low poverty, which in a state with a documented history of systemic oppression, discriminatory barriers, and education debt, are predominantly White communities. For this reason, the study applied a CRT lens and focus on LP and high poverty schools.

The delusory nature of race and racism and its irrational pervasiveness is as "we continue to employ and deploy it" (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 51), people create a space where initiatives for change and innovation are ineffective and powerless people attempt to exact change. Stories from the powerless or historically excluded groups in NC schools can serve to counter ideological hegemony and can provide a new perspective and space for change (Milner & Howard, 2013; Fajardo Mora, 2014, Tuck & Silverman, 2016). There is power in personal accounts and narratives (i.e., student, educator, leadership voice) to engender participation and collaboration for change (Friend & Caruthers, 2012), and in counternarratives in exposing the effects of discriminatory and exclusionary practices in schools on marginalized groups (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Shapiro, 2014). For these reasons over the years, the concerns gripping the minds of NC are those of White communities and the voices unheard are those of historically excluded communities—the qualitative strand of this mixed method design—framed the bulk of this study.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study can provide insights into the leadership dispositions and systemic factors necessary to advance educational equity in NC. This study can help policymakers and educational leaders identify the impact of current leadership policies on school and student success, as well as the necessary changes to ensure equitable access to high-quality education for all students.

The South's history of systemic oppression, discriminatory barriers, and education debt has not only affected its educational evolution, but has also, over time, developed racially defined barriers impeding the potential success of historically excluded populations. If it were not for five school districts and families seeking fairness in opportunities and in state-driven allocation of resources, NC may never have known the extent to which it failed to provide all students opportunities for learning and to a sound and basic education. Public-School Forum Interim President and Executive Director Priddy (2019) commented on this failure. Priddy stated:

> To become a globally competitive, economically strong state, each and every one of our children needs equitable access to a strong system of public schools, regardless of their geographic or economic background. The challenge of providing these opportunities is great and has only grown with time—and our state leadership has failed to meet its constitutional obligation. (Paul, 2019, para. 3)

Leandro v. State of NC (1997) concluded financial disparities in parts of the state's educational system have contributed to opportunity gaps. A study framing this in context of the lived experiences of leaders within NC schools has the potential to share the impact of effective school improvement support on schools to effectuate positive change and success for students.

There is power in personal accounts and narratives (i.e., student, educator, leadership voice) to engender participation and collaboration for change (Friend & Caruthers, 2012), and in counternarratives in exposing the effects of discriminatory and exclusionary practices in schools on marginalized groups (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Shapiro, 2014).

Carter and Welner (2013) stated opportunity gaps are created by unfair systems, poverty, and segregation and exacerbated by access to fewer resources in schools. For a state like NC, judged as having an unfair system, experiencing poverty, and with a history of segregation, it is not startling to learn opportunity gaps exist. Prompted by the SBE strategic plan, a sense of urgency around eliminating opportunity gaps increases the importance of the research. Urgency became critical with the 2020 WestEd report and because until students are treated more equitably in schools, these gaps only widen.

Positionality

> I am from red soil and bright sun.
> From *karité*, *cube maggi* and mentholatum
> I am from mud bricks, floor tiles, and grass eating goats
> I'm from eating together on the *natte*, with my hands, at a table, with utensils . . . always with family.
> I am from Anita and Grégoire Ouedraogo
> Prayer warrior and griot, united we're stronger, resisting the colonizer.
> I'm from cathedrals, marketplace haggling, morning calls to prayer from the nearby mosque and music.
> I'm from the Mossi people of Ouagadougou, Burkina-Faso
> From *Tô*, gumbo sauce, and *allocco*
> Memories of each captured in photographs and trinkets in trunks, cabinets, and on walls
> Influenced by educators, politicians, and nurses; a service minded people, a village, a nation, a tribe.

An upbringing in socially and economically developing spaces along with professional experience in LP schools influenced my perspective of imposed hierarchies, especially in education and of school labels based on accountability models rooted in racialized intelligence testing, all within the wheelhouse of reform. I hold a general mistrust, distrust, and doubt for the

colonizer and thus around any claim he makes denying race or racism or contradicting current dominant ideologies. Understanding where distrust stems from permits me to be more intentional with professional decisions and mindful of biases.

My interest in school improvement first stemmed from my work in a historically Black school in the South. The connections to enslavement and subsequent periods still clearly define the area I reside in. In fact, the history of the historically Black school in which I worked, aligns perfectly to Anderson's historical accounts of segregation and exclusion within *The Education of Blacks in the South* (Anderson, 1988/2010). School improvement and reform has been connected to every LP school in the state and in my opinion, addressed and implemented devoid of cultural context. I am of the mindset history and identity define our interactions and reactions. I am drawn to school improvement because it concerns marginalized, underrepresented, or excluded groups navigating existing oppressive histories and ideology while attempting to dismantle them along the way.

Definitions of Terms

Achievement gap is defined as "disparities in standardized test scores between Black and White, Latina/o and White, and recent immigrant and White students'" (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 3).

Change receptivity is defined by its ability to bring about organizational change (Frahm & Brown, 2007) by acting as a measure to determine how willing a person or group is to change (Frahm & Brown, 2007; Pettigrew et al., 2001). For this study, being receptive to change must include having a capacity (i.e., knowledge, capability, and willingness) for change. Social and historical forces shape receptivity as economic and political forces shape equity. Together, all four influence critical change receptivity.

Critical Race Theory (CRT): CRT is "a framework or set of basic perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of society that maintain the subordination and marginalization of people of color" (D. G. Solórzano, 1997, p. 6). Central propositions of educational inequities under CRT are: (a) race is a factor of inequity, (b) tensions between property and human rights in U.S. society, and (c) intersections of race and property (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995).

Culture of Power: This concept "represents a set of values, beliefs, ways of acting and being that for sociopolitical reasons, unfairly and unevenly elevate groups of people—mostly White, upper and middle class, male and heterosexual—to positions where they have more control over money, people, and societal values than their non-culture-of-power peers" (Delpit, 1988 as cited by Barton & Yang, 2000, p. 873).

*Cultural Competenc*e: Cultural competence refers to cross-cultural awareness and influences (Chao et al., 2011). It also refers to communication effectiveness across cultures and the ability to adapt to other cultural environments (e.g., Hansen et al., 2000). Cultural competence is always expanding and is centered on experience, knowledge, skills, awareness, and attitudes between or involving more than one culture (Deardorff, 2006).

Dispositional Factors: Dispositional factors as barriers or facilitators of educational equity are (a) a knowledge of educational equity and systemic factors contributing to educational equity, (b) the means or capability through resources (i.e., a diversity of personnel, flexibility and availability of funding, instructional and professional learning), or authority–to implement initiatives that address inequities in schools, and (c) a willingness to pursue four social justice aligned dispositional domains (Fortner et al., 2021; Shields, 2019, 2020). The domains include (a) dedicated to equitable change, (b) addressing

inequitable distributions of power, (c) arguing for democracy through voice, and (d) finding balance and affecting change.

Education Debt: This is characterized by the various disparities existing between Black and brown schools versus White schools in the United States (Ladson-Billings, 2006). These disparities include but are not limited to disparities in funding, access, and decision-making power.

Equity: It is defined by the NC SBE (NC SBE), as the belief and practice of ensuring every student is treated in a fair and just manner, providing the necessary allocation of resources for the success of every student, and eliminating discriminatory barriers to full participation and opportunities for every student.

*Historically Marginalized Persons/Populations/Communitie*s: These communities include individuals experiencing discrimination and exclusion because they have been denied full participation in dominant cultural, social, political, and economic activities. Such activities may include denied access to equitable educational opportunities, medical services, housing, employment, and more. Marginalized communities can include people of color, women, LGBTQIA+, low-income individuals, prisoners, individuals with disabilities, and more.

Historically Disenfranchised Persons/Populations/Communities: Used interchangeably with *Historically Marginalized*, disenfranchised communities are those communities stripped of power and as a result denied rights and power. The term may refer to voting rights, but in the context of this study the removal of power includes removal from dominant cultural, social, political, and economic activities.

Ideology: Ideology "concerns the ways in which ideas of different kinds grip the minds of the masses, and thereby become a 'material force'" (Hall, 1986, p. 26).

Leadership Dispositions: These are an educational leader's prevailing tendencies or inclinations toward educational related activities, strategies, policies, etc. and with respect to stakeholders. Specific to this study, leadership dispositions pertain to transformative leadership theory tenets and descriptors (Shields, 2010). See *Transformative Dispositional Factors* definition.

Low-Performing School: A LP school has a school performance grade of 'D' or 'F' and a growth status of 'Met' or 'Not Met'.

Mattering: As a construct of equitable change, mattering refers to a process of finding human and cultural significance in a world or space that would otherwise marginalize, disenfranchise, or exclude a group or individual (Elliott et al., 2004; Love, 2019).

Norm: It is believed hegemonies or institutions impact the whole of society thus making them perfect for the preservation of ideology over generations. Foucault (1972/1980) wrote the hegemonic group gains power and rule by making their ideology "a natural rule, a norm" (p. 106). Meaning, a norm or natural rule, is just another word for standard, and is "typically defined by people in position of power" (Carbajal, 2009, p. 4).

Opportunity gaps: NC SBE states opportunity gaps are "defined by the disparity in access to quality schools and resources needed for all children to be successful" (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2019, p. 4).

Other: The word is connected to the concept of norm or normal rule. In creating a normal rule, humans "[categorize and bracket] individuals who don't fit the stereotypical normal

'type'" (Carbajal, 2009, pp. 4–5). By Bhabha's (1983) definition, the other is used to identify that nonstandard individual, and in Freire's (1970/2005).

Transformational Leadership: Leadership that focuses on attitudes, norms, institutions, and behaviors structuring daily life (Burns, 1978 as cited by Fortner et al., 2021, p. 8). Fortner et al. (2021) define the transformative leader as one who "works to dismantle barriers and inequities found within a 'culture of power'" (p. 9).

Recurring low-performing schools (R-LP): A R-LP school is identified as LP in any 2 of the last 3 years (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2022).

NC SBE: This term is self-defined as a state board, setting "policy and general procedures for public school systems across the state of NC, including teacher pay and qualifications, course content, testing requirements, and manages state education funds" (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2023).

*Systemic Factor*s: Identified by researchers (Noguera, 2003; Scheetz & Senge, 2016) and aligned to CRT's stance on the salience of racism in the United States (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997), systemic factors to educational equity include racism, capacity building, and resource allocation in the form of funding.

*Transformative Dispositional Factor*s: Transformative dispositions or factors as barriers or facilitators of educational equity include: (a) a dedication to equitable change, (b) a drive to address inequitable distributions of power, (c) arguing for democracy through voice, and (d) finding balance and affecting change (Shields, 2010, 2011).

Summary and Organization

This study examined existing systemic and dispositional factors impacting educational equity in NC. The study applied historical information and analyzed measures and metrics

collected from school leader responses of a survey and interview questions. Schools designated as LP by the SBE enroll most of the state's property-poor communities, which the state concedes, as evidenced by *Leandro*, results in inequitable educational provisions across schools. Surveying and subsequently interviewing a sample of school leadership across the state to identify the presence of critical change receptivity, along with systemic and dispositional factors addressing student needs and effectuate change, determines the state's readiness for educational change through eliminating opportunity gaps.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the research study, including the background, problem statement, research questions, significance, and the theoretical framework. Chapter 2 reviews literature on educational equity and leadership. It draws on evidence from research to chronicle the racialized history of education in the South, using a CRT framework. Literary evidence coupled with narratives from lived experiences provided in Chapter 2 links human dispositions and experience to organizational change, change readiness, and CRT. This contextualizes education in NC and factors appearing as barriers or facilitators to making deep equitable change. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology as a mixed-methods sequential explanatory study to identify factors contributing to the receptivity of educational leaders in NC. Chapter 3 provides a breakdown of quantitative and qualitative design aspects of the study. Chapter 4 presents survey findings and subscale correlations for the quantitative phase and provides results from a document analysis and interviews for the qualitative phase of the study. Chapter 5 synthesizes the work with discussion and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I dissect key components of the study, provide contextual information about education in North Carolina (NC), and anchor the research using a critical social framework. Elements are discussed in the context of education for social justice and school leadership receptivity to change, such as implementing equitable policies and practices.

Several theoretical bodies are explored within this chapter to connect change and people within the context of the antebellum South. The state board, triggered by *Leandro,* created a goal to eliminate opportunity gaps. Because change is complex and better understood within a humanization framework (Lafer, 2014), I then explored humanizing frameworks. Humanizing frameworks indicate individuals are shaped by a variety of factors and by their lived experiences. Because I pursued this research for a view into the leaders and educators constituting education systems in NC as they pushed to meet the expectations of *Leandro*, I used Shield's (2010) transformative leadership theory (TLT), which outlines dispositions of a transformative leader and critical race theory (CRT), which sets racism as a normal and pervasive component of this nation's social fabric (Milner, 2007). The transformative dispositions primarily addressed include a dedication to equitable change, addressing inequitable distributions of power, arguing for the democratization of schooling by giving voice to students and stakeholders, and finding balance between when to stay the course and when to pushback in efforts to challenge current practices. To help guide this work, I designed visualizations (shared in this chapter) connecting these bodies of work.

Contextualization of this study to NC is expressed using a historical narrative, lived experience testimonies, and a brief reference to current events. The critical social framework

anchoring this research is CRT as defined by Bell (1995) and Ladson-Billings (2006). Additionally, CRT is supported by Shield's (2011, 2018, 2020) tenets of TLT and informed by a humanizing social justice approach to education and components to organizational change.

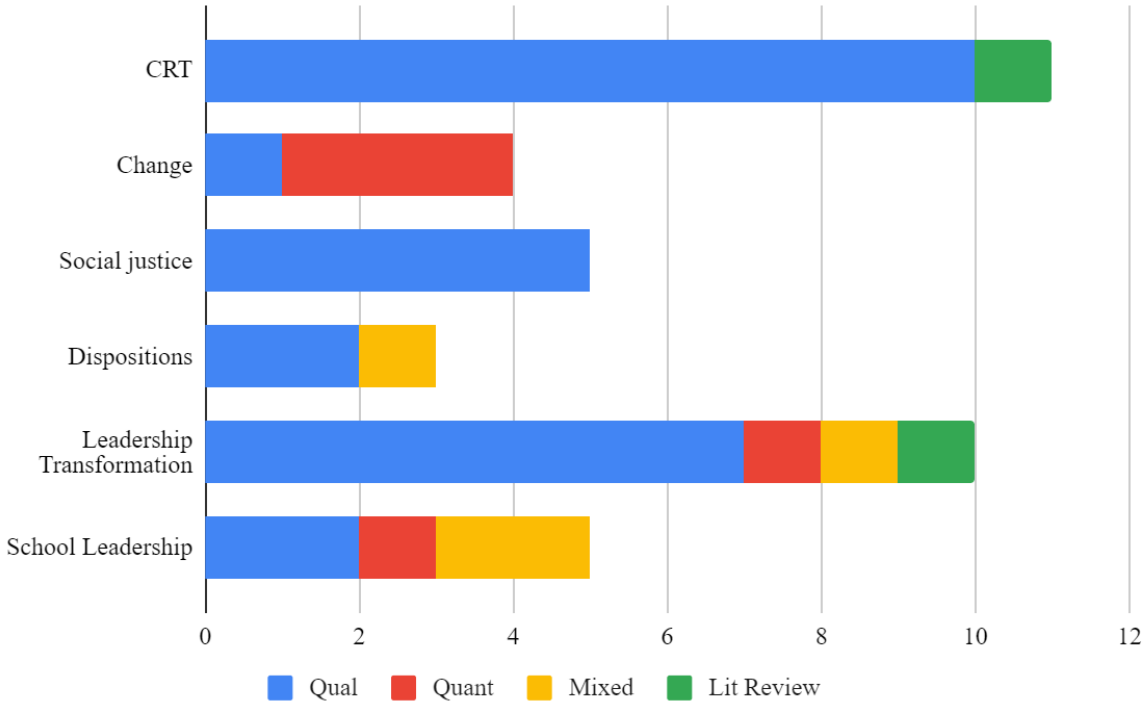
The heart of this study was focused on existing leadership dispositions and systemic factors impacting schools in NC as the state attempts to eliminate opportunity gaps and raise accountability outcomes. I assumed the process of eliminating gaps in NC requires receptivity, buy-in or willingness from stakeholders, and a readiness for change through the implementation of an organizational change process aligned to factors, either dispositional or systemic, occurring in schools.

I reviewed the literature outlined in this chapter by using keywords primarily associated with social justice, educational leadership, school administration, organizational change, change readiness, reform, educational transformation, school improvement, and opportunity gaps. Inclusive of these keywords, key concepts primarily articulated across a sample set of 35 articles or books ranged in topic from African American students to white supremacy (see Appendix C).

Concurrently, I explored various critical social frameworks. I then compiled tenets or factors of CRT, TLT, and organizational change into a matrix. I also added appropriate literature citations, findings, and methodology. Figure 2 provides a visualization of the primary framework or theory identified in the sample set of articles and books. In the context of keywords analyzed, 31.4% (n = 35) identified CRT as a key theory and 28.6% (n = 35) identified either transformational or transformative leadership models. A further review of literature grew from cross-referencing references, and from discussions among critical friends, university professors, and committee members. I then identified and charted methodological trends from the research's elements.

Figure 2

Theories, Framework, and Overarching Methodologies of Literature Reviewed



The resulting compilation of keywords, reference lists, critical frameworks, and study problem trends contributed to the dissertation methodological design and design sequence. Figure 2 also provides a breakdown by count of the overarching methodological designs literature on CRT, TLT and organizational change reviewed. The gaps I identified in the literature led to the finalization of the problem statement and the development of study instruments. I made updates to the literature review based on reflections from experts (i.e., committee members and critical friends), and any previously unaccounted for components to the research based on preliminary study results.

Knowledge Capital

Learners enter the world of formal instruction armed with individual skills—known as human capital—and social capital (i.e., shared values, beliefs, habits, and resources) that shape their identity and influence their functioning in social settings such as school (Bourdieu, 1986; Burt, 1997; Coleman, 1988; Fortner et al., 2021; Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998; Swartz, 1997). Additionally, educators possess their own social capital (Hodge & Stosich, 2022). Social capital, as described by Bourdieu (1986), arises from relationships and interactions across various social domains and affects individuals' adaptability to change (Healy & Cote, 2001; Fortner et al., 2021). Elements of social capital encompass individual dispositions, cultural competences, skill-based capabilities, and knowledge. When combined, human and social capital constitute what can be referred to as knowledge capital.

Cultural Hegemony and Neoliberalism in the Hidden Curriculum

Cultural hegemony refers to the dominant cultural norms and values shaping social institutions, including education (Gramsci, 1971/2020). Hegemony perpetuates dominant cultural values and beliefs in society. Cultural norms and values in NC shaped educational policies and practices from independence through integration in ways often reinforcing the status quo (Mayo, 2014; Thomas, 2009). In so doing, historical statutes, educational policies, and practices from NC continue to contribute to the marginalization of certain groups, such as students of color and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Apple, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Neoliberalism refers to a set of economic policies that prioritize the private sector and individualism over the public sector and collective well-being (Harvey, 2005). In education, neoliberal policies emphasize competition and accountability through testing (Savage, 2016). High stakes testing in schools emphasizes a hierarchy of knowledge marginalizing understanding

students have gained outside the classroom or beyond the standard curriculum. With contemporary emphasis on high stakes testing and career readiness, it stands to reason neoliberal values have a significant impact on education in the United States.

Before schooling, learners possess limited exposure to the hidden curriculum of schooling and hegemonically standardized frameworks of knowledge, perpetuating cultural hegemony (Apple, 1971; Apple & King, 1977; Dreeben, 1968; Giroux & Penna, 1979; Jackson, 1968; Overly, 1970). The hidden curriculum taught in educational institutions is a set of "unstated norms, values, and beliefs" (Giroux & Penna, 1979, p. 22). The hidden curriculum amplifies cultural hegemony. Hierarchized ideals of knowledge change over time and influence how learner success is defined (Hodge & Stosich, 2022; Spillane et al., 2002; Weick, 1995). The assumption underlying the creation of measures and models of success materializes from dominant decision-making groups (e.g., government agencies for public instruction or ministries of education, school boards and district administrators, education associations and professional organizations, education researchers and experts, education philanthropic organizations) about what constitutes a good education, what knowledge is meaningful or necessary, and who receives knowledge capital.

Knowledge Hierarchies

The adoption of neoliberal education efforts like high stakes testing and accountability practices (Brathwaite, 2017; Hursh, 2007) favor dominant ideals and a hegemony of knowledge (Gramsci, 1971/2020; Mayo, 2014). This adoption suggests nondominant ideals do not matter. The testing of specific content knowledge as designed by school accountability models and culturally influenced exams (Hodge & Stosich, 2022) suggests true knowledge is gained from the education complex (Anyon, 1979). Thus, knowledge achieved outside the classroom and outside

of the standard course of study (SCOS) is rendered insignificant. However, even neoliberal and hegemonic knowledge curricula are hierarchized.

School performance grades and accountability models suggest there exists a ranking to knowledge based on how outcomes are partitioned. There is (a) best knowledge, which leads a student to be college and career ready; (b) better knowledge, which leads a student to achieve grade-level proficiency, and (c) good knowledge, which prepares students to pursue an approved vocation. Furthermore, these hierarchized ideals of knowledge exist in temporal and spatial flux as time passes, policies change, society changes, and people 'make sense' of varying situations (Hodge & Stosich, 2022; Spillane et al., 2002; Weick, 1995) all influencing how people define or measure learner success and vice versa. If tools are developed with a particular class, culture, and race of learner in mind at a specific point in history, in a specific society, and by designers of specific disposition, then people create tools more effective at measuring the learner of class, culture, or race, for that time, and society.

In state accountability measures and models of success, the following is generally assumed:

- Consent in a hegemony of academic subjects (Lamb & Araos, 1996; Reitz, 2017) exists,
- Consent by all critical groups exists around what constitutes a good education,
- Consent by all critical groups exists as to what knowledge is meaningful, important or necessary to succeed, or to engage in one's civic duties, and this
- Ideal knowledge is increased with testing (Au, 2009), accessible through formal education.

Mattering

Mattering (Blustein, 2006; Elliott et al., 2004; Love, 2019; Rosenberg, 1989; Youniss & Yates, 1997), or more aptly, the absence of mattering, plays a role in perpetuating gaps disregarding equity and the impact of race and racism on socioeconomic disparities. Mattering in education is related to Freire's (2021) pedagogy of hope. Freire's ideas on education and empowerment align with the notion of students feeling valued, seen, and recognized in the educational context, as characterized by mattering. Freire emphasized the importance of creating dialogical relationships between educators and students, where students' voices, experiences, and perspectives are acknowledged and respected. This approach seeks to counteract oppressive educational systems by fostering critical consciousness (Freire, 1974/2005, 2015), thereby empowering students to become active participants in their own learning and social transformation. Mattering refers to the sense of significance, belonging, and worth students experience when they feel they matter (Elliott et al., 2004; Love, 2019).

Categorizing knowledge and persons into groups with varying levels of mattering (Elliott et al., 2004; Love, 2019) perpetuates inequity. Disregarding efforts in mattering, human capital, social capital, and funds of knowledge can perpetuate opportunity gaps and inequity in education. When students' experiences, identities, and forms of knowledge are ignored or devalued in the educational system, it can lead to marginalization and unequal access to resources and opportunities (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Noguera, 2008, 2014). A disregard of knowledge capital and funds of knowledge is a deficit-based action ignoring equity and discounts the impact of race, racism, and socioeconomic disparities (Davis & Museus, 2019; Fortner et al., 2021; Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Disregarding societal inequities has the effect of recriminating specific learner groups for gaps in educational performance and making them and their efforts appear insignificant. As an attribute of deficit thinking (Bruton & Robles-Piña, 2009; Davis & Museus, 2019; Haggis, 2006; McKay & Devlin, 2016; D. G. Solórzano & Yosso, 2001; Valencia, 1997, 2010; L. Weiner, 2003), blaming the victim (Ryan, 1976) places the responsibility of experienced inequities on learners from historically disenfranchised, excluded, or oppressed backgrounds. Turning a blind eye to equity helps to maintain a banking mindset, rejecting social capital (Bourdeau, 1986) and the human experience. A banking mindset upholds a system that (a) maintains the status quo by not "changing the consciousness of the oppressed;" (b) is riddled with "contradictions;" and (c) will "never propose to students that they critically consider reality" (Freire, 2011, pp. 118-119). Education becomes a measured act; mechanical movements between "depositories" (students; Freire, 2011, p. 117) and "the depositor" (the teacher; Freire, 2011, p. 119) devoid of the human experience.

Humanizing Education

A humanizing experience is to value and respect the unique experiences and perspectives of individuals. The humanizing framework emphasizes the need to recognize the intrinsic value of each person and to create environments promoting the full expression of individual potential (Torres-Harding et al., 2019). This approach recognizes individuals are shaped by a variety of factors, including their cultural background, personal experiences, and social context (Phinney, 1992; Rivas-Drake et al., 2014). By understanding and acknowledging these factors, individuals and communities can work to create inclusive and supportive environments promoting personal growth and well-being (Diener et al., 2009; Eccles et al., 2003).

Humanizing social justice is an approach centering around the importance of valuing and respecting the inherent worth and dignity of each person (P. A. Smith, 2019). This approach emphasizes the need to recognize and respond to the unique needs and experiences of individuals and communities (Johnson, 2018; Jones & Stewart, 2016). Humanizing social justice is rooted in the belief social justice cannot be achieved through a one-size-fits-all approach (Adams, 2017), but rather requires a commitment to recognizing and addressing the complex and intersecting factors contributing to inequality and oppression (Garcia & Martinez, 2019).

Humanizing Anti-Blackness

In this postmodern United States, people exist in a new revolution for their civil rights (Glaude, 2020). Postcolonialism (Bhabha, 1983), post-slavery, and anti-Black (Carruthers, 2018; Hytten & Stemhagen, 2023) circumstances have offered a pivotal opportunity for transformation. The civil and racial unrest triggered by the murder of George Floyd by the hands of police in May 2020 (Bell et al., 2021) and the racialized resistance of truth and discomfort in current anti-CRT sentiments have called for a re-humanization of the education complex. Circumstance has called for a dismantling of anti-Black sentiment (Hytten & Stemhagen, 2023) surrounding dehumanizing policies and practices in education. Combating anti-Blackness has called for an end to racism and the dehumanization of Black persons, a dismantling of the atrocities and violence done to Black persons, the end to the enslavement of Black bodies (Warren & Coles, 2020), and a reset on schooling (Hytten & Stemhagen, 2023; Ladson-Billings, 2021).

A humanistic paradigm promotes liberation (Gandhi & Mukherji, 2022), welfare, dignity (Khilji, 2021; Pirson, 2017), and human potential (Brockett, 1997). To humanize is to create caring environments and positive relationships (Kelley, 1969; Khilji, 2021), which in education, may include personalizing learning (Dutton, 1976). Indeed, to humanize in the context of

education is to trust and cherish students, to value their feelings, and to foster openness by being intentionally self-reflective (Kelley, 1969). As Towler-Evans and Edmiston (2022) wrote, “We humanize when we see people as humans and treat them as equals” (p. 11). Together, a leader applying a humanistic approach and resists anti-Blackness, fosters a culture of learning and community, harbors a deep desire for equity, calls for the dismantling of systemically racist policies and practices impacting communities, and seeks the liberation of Black persons (Hytten & Stemhagen, 2021, 2023; Kelley, 1969; Khilji, 2021; Towler-Evans & Edmiston, 2022). Humanizing leadership supports diversity, identity, and stakeholder engagement (Khilji, 2021).

Schooling Links to Human Experience

The human experience is inextricably linked to schooling (Dewey, 1938; Flinders & Thornton, 2011; Gay, 2004). The only way to achieve educational transformation leading to liberation is by directly addressing the human experience and having a deeper commitment to human rights (Goodlad, 1984; McFarland, 2015). Humanizing schooling is done by turning an introspective eye on human existence, from genesis to modernity. With introspection and critical discourse (Freire, 1970/2005; Levinson, 2011) comes socially just transformation and ultimately, emancipation (Freire, 2015). Opposing actions perpetuate a system disregarding a student’s funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992; González et al., 2007; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992). Funds of knowledge are a collective of knowledge gained from family and challenge deficit-based myths to the culture of poverty (Gorski, 2008). Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (1992) defined funds of knowledge as “strategic and cultural resources” (p. 313).

If educators, researchers, policymakers, and community members disregard the human factor and continue to apply banking habits in schooling, then transformation is unlikely. Without a humanizing approach to education, then transformative dispositions (Fortner et al.,

2021; Shields, 2010, 2020) and receptivity (Frahm & Brown, 2007; Pettigrew et al., 2001) for equitable change will be challenging to identify or develop in school leaders. Addressing equitable change and mattering (Butler, 1993; Cheah, 1996; Elliott et al., 2004; Love, 2019) in a space of inevitable inequality—the United States—is a necessary undertaking. Mattering as a construct of equitable change refers to a process of finding human and cultural significance in a world or space that would otherwise marginalize, disenfranchise, or exclude a group or individual (Elliott et al., 2004; Love, 2019).

Inevitable Inequities

Democratic educational outcomes in the United States are by design, and existing educational policies are an extension of ideological expansionism (Gorski, 2012; Watkins, 2001). For example, Pratt's boarding school design on American Indian education in the 19th century with the Carlisle Indian School (Adams, 2020), coupled with published medical views by the abolitionist, Dr. Rush, on the leprous skin of "affectionate and grateful" (Butterfield, 1951, p. 636) Black people in the United States during the 18th century (Plummer, 1970; Takaki, 1993/2012) were both products of white education and helped to either manufacture or influence outcomes of the "other" (disenfranchised or marginalized persons) in the United States.

As Caliendo (2014) described, the United States is a democracy and as all democracies, makes promises of voice, equality, and freedom to its citizens. On the heels of its independence, the nation's forefathers set out to create a "more perfect union" fostering justice, peace, and liberty for its people ("The U.S. Constitution: Preamble," 1787). Born out of democratic values, the United States saw education as a "complex need to be met by society" (Goodlad, 1979, p. 15) and "the true corrective of abuses of constitutional power" (Jefferson, 1820, para. 1). Education is how to discover truth through historical context (Au, 2014), attain knowledge, pass down

ideology (Entwistle, 2009; Foucault, 1972/1980), and practice conformity or freedom (Freire, 1970/2005; Shaull, 2005). However, capitalism is juxtaposed to and inseparably intermixed with U.S. democracy.

Caliendo (2014) described capitalism as a system accepting economic inequality as part of its function. Indeed, persistent and disproportionate access to wealth and power has been endemic throughout U.S. history. For a country like the United States built on the enslavement, labor, rape, and selling of Black bodies, capitalism and race are inalienable (Caliendo, 2014; Hannah-Jones, 2021). Capitalism as an U.S. economic system accepting economic inequality existing under enslavement, Jim Crow, Black codes, and convict leasing among other systems is racialized. Furthermore, the distribution of debt, which can materialize itself as generational poverty often found in neighborhoods of low-performing schools, is a "cycle of disadvantage" and a "window into economic and radical inequality" (Caliendo, 2014, p. 51). This window, with the COVID-19 global pandemic, exhibits exacerbated inequities among BIPOC and low-income families (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2020) only system-level change, radical and transformative, can eliminate.

Changing Inequity

In broad terms, social justice refers to morally right and fair behavior in connection to social, political, and economic factors. Walzer (1984/2008), an interpretivist theorist, defined processes and relationships in a just society as "distributive" (p. 43). A distributive community (Walzer, 1984/2008) is one operating through shared and socially constructed goods. Because goods can be tangible or abstract, in the space of social justice and education, they may signify educational supplies, the school building, or values such as access and liberty. Some researchers have attributed transcendental plurality (Dworkin, 2000; Perry, 2015; Rawls, 1973; Sen, 2010;

Witcher, 2013)—shared, diverse sociohistorical values—and principles of distribution (Miller, 2001) as a different definition of a socially just society. From this definition, social justice holds true to the following two tenets: complex equality and cultural recognition (Walzer, 1984/2008; Witcher, 2013).

Witcher (2013) indicated a misrepresentation of complex equality results in a "distributive injustice;" one of "exploitation, [and] economic marginalization into low paid, undesirable work (or unemployment) and deprivation" (p. 57), though cultural recognition values differences. A deprivation of cultural recognition or cultural obscurity is a divergence to social justice. Leading with cultural recognition means resisting "cultural domination," resisting "lack of representation," and resisting "voice and disrespect" (Witcher, 2013, p. 57). Arneson (1990) argued Walzer's (1984/2008) notion of complex equality endorses a limited egalitarianism. Complex equality develops as spheres (sets of social practices) become autonomous. For this autonomy to exist, "goods [are] distributed according to their social meanings" (Arneson, 1990, p. 103), and culturally endorsed social meanings can pose a risk to social justice.

In the context of justice, Rousseau (1762/1978) argued equality is less about individuals or groups reaching equal levels or degrees of power and wealth. Equality is instead about rendering power incapable of violence and existing levels of opulence or poverty incapable of trafficking or compromising humanity (Ayers et al., 1998; Shklar, 2017; Watkins, 2001). One example of a culturally endorsed social meaning devalued social justice was of a separate but equal education validated through the court ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) upheld the segregationist laws of its era, and promoted unequal rights grounded by race and racism. Though components of complex equality value aspects of fair behavior, it does not guarantee justice and does not prevent domination (Arneson, 1990, p. 103).

Social Justice Lens

For this current study, social justice was characterized by leading through hope and radical imagination (e.g., radical joy). Social justice accounts for equity, endorses social capital (Bourdieu, 1986), values funds of knowledge (González et al., 2007; Moll et al., 1992; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992), and promotes mattering (Elliott et al., 2004; Love, 2019). Where education has the power to liberate or to conform learners (Ayers et al., 2000; Entwistle, 2009; Foucault, 1972/1980; Freire, 1970/2005; Mayo, 2014; Shaull, 2005), a socially just education actively seeks to liberate and empower learners. Furthermore, Kelley (2001) suggested social justice for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and by BIPOC communities requires a disassembling of (versus the repairing of) existing educational designs.

Imagination in the context of systemic change is a radical form of resistance against inequity (Giroux, 2013; Spector, 2017) and the status quo. Imagining alternatives to the status quo incites organizational change (Lipman, 2018; Spector, 2017). Imagination in education, from a social justice lens, and as a form of resistance opens a space for a transformative change (i.e., one where leaders receptive to change endorse social capital, value funds of knowledge, and promote mattering) to be implemented, actualized, and ultimately sustained.

Humanizing Organizational Change

A social justice lens in education requires an examination of the underlying social, economic, and political structures contributing to inequitable practices (Kumashiro, 2000). Humanizing organizational change emphasizes the importance of valuing and supporting individuals in the change process, including assessing their change receptivity (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Oldham & Hackman, 1981). By using a social justice lens and humanizing organizational change, dispositional factors of K–12 administrators contributing to inequitable

practices (e.g., implicit bias, an absence of cultural competence, and resistance to change; Benitez & Malagon, 2019) can be addressed. Furthermore, an examination of change receptivity can help ensure organizational change efforts are successful and sustainable (Harris, 2020).

Equitable Humanistic Leadership for Change

Varying thoughts exist around what constitutes organizational change. Quattrone and Hopper (2001) pondered this definition, sharing many focus on uniformity as opposed to the multiplicity of change. For example, Quattrone and Hopper (2001) stated individualism and realism are when "organizations change when individuals' action modifies the organization with respect to some chosen criteria," and contextualism socio-constructivism views change as "a process of institutionalization through the adoption of rules, norms and routines" (p. 408). University blogs like that of Harvard Business School (Stobierski, 2020) defined organizational change as steps taken by a business or institution to alter significant components such as internal processes, culture, infrastructure, and more in itself. Educational change would thus refer to organizational change actions taken by the educational complex or subsections thereof (e.g., local educational agency, school complex, school, classroom) to bring about a positive impact. Whether defined by literature or theorists, Quattrone and Hopper (2011) argued rather than focus on "What is the 'right' behavior to achieve organizational objectives?," theorists and practitioners of organizational change should ask instead, "What behavior is permissible without undermining the organizational stability of the network of humans and non-humans called organizations?" (p. 480).

Schools should work to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all students, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds (Milner, 2010). Permissible dispositions of school leaders seeking to transform education aim to make school more inclusive

and equitable. As such, school decision-makers should consider adopting a humanistic, social justice-driven approach to change. Leaders who adopt a humanizing leadership approach prioritize relationships, value diverse perspectives, and challenge dominant narratives and power structures, creating more inclusive and equitable learning environments (Grogan & Andrews, 2002).

One significant element is building relationships with students, families, and communities by incorporating their voices into decision-making processes to create inclusive and welcoming environments (Lopez, 2003). Another element involves challenging dominant narratives and power structures perpetuating systemic inequalities in education and creating more equitable policies and practices (DeCuir & Dixson, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Miller et al., 2020; D. G. Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Finally, leaders who value diverse perspectives and experiences promote more culturally responsive teaching practices and create more inclusive learning environments (Adams et al., 2016; Gay, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Walter, 2018). An equity-driven leadership approach is necessary to address systemic inequities in education impacting students of color (Esquierdo-Leal & Houmanfar, 2021). By adopting an equity-driven, humanizing leadership approach, leaders can disrupt systemic policies and practices impacting students of color and promote more inclusive and equitable learning environments (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2017).

Ushering in Change

Change begets growth, meaning for an organization to improve, flexibility is required for change (Hussain et al., 2018). At its fundamental core, change is a shift from the known, or how things are, to the unknown, or how things may become in resistance to the status quo. A Freirean approach to educational change is centered on learner empowerment, suggesting a shift from

limit situations (Dubin & Prins, 2011; Rivage-Seul, 1992) in which one has perceived obstacles or oppression rather than possibilities, to unfinishedness (i.e., radically imagining futures of real possibilities, hope, and liberation; Dubin & Prins, 2011; Freire, 2021; Levitas, 1990; Morrow & Torres, 2002; Rivage-Seul, 1992). This approach is also drawn from Ernst Bloch's utopia (Dubin & Prins, 2011; Kellner, 1997; Kellner & O'Hara, 1976; Levitas, 1990). The Freirean imagination has been credited with inspiring social change movements around the world (Dubin & Prins, 2011; Reygadas, 1998). Regardless of the approach, varying schools of thought concede the human element is essential to ushering change and should not be ignored (Çalışkan & Gökalp, 2020; Clegg & Walsh, 2004; Ford & Ford, 1995; Orlikowski, 1996).

The Human Factor to Change

The human component referenced in educational or organizational change refers to people's internal or cognitive orientation toward change (Çalışkan & Gökalp, 2020; Clarke et al., 1996; Hussain et al., 2018), sensemaking (Levin, 1998; Weick, 1995), and cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957; Levin, 1998) specific to beliefs, dispositions, and attitudes. Change itself, internal and external factors impacting change, the environment in which change occurs, and how recipients of change in and outside of the organization respond to or make sense of the change shape the process for organizational change and influence its potential for success (Bartunek et al., 1992; Çalışkan & Gökalp, 2020; Lau & Woodman, 1995; Weber & Manning, 2001). Thus, from inception to realization, change is multifaceted and complex, and its effectiveness is made capable through humanization (Lafer, 2014).

Organizational Readiness

B. J. Weiner's (2009) theory of organizational readiness for change identifies shared resolve for change, change commitment, and shared beliefs in the group's power to change and

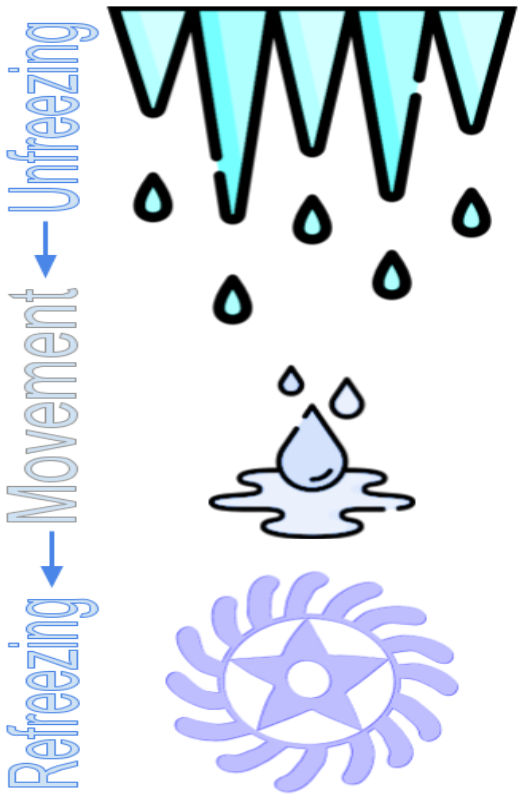
change efficacy as measures of organizational readiness for change (Shea et al., 2014). Alternatively, the promoting action on research implementation in health services (PARIHS) framework identified (a) evidence of research, knowledge, experience, and preferences from multiple stakeholders; (b) organizational context like culture (i.e., shared beliefs and attitudes), leadership (i.e., teamwork, decision-making, structures, barriers, and empowerment), and evaluation (i.e., performance measures); and (c) facilitation (i.e., support or help provided) as determining factors of successful change implementation in clinical practices (Kitson et al., 1998; Kitson et al., 2008; Rycroft-Malone et al., 2004). Regardless of readiness, Pierce et al. (2002) suggested change arises in response to internal or external pressures and reactive change, or from organizational desires and proactive change. Whichever way change is actualized, implementing it is a complex enterprise (Glieck, 1987/2008; Hussain et al., 2018).

Lewin's Change Model

Planned organizational change models (POCMs) such as Lewin's (1947) change model define the process of change as linear and identifies three stages to initiating a transfer from the known to the unknown. These three stages are (a) unfreezing, (b) change, and (c) refreezing. Figure 3 provides a visual representation of these stages beginning with the melting of ice (unfreezing), the change to water (movement), and molding back to ice again into a new or transformed shape (refreezing). The new shape displayed uses *esa wo suban*, which is the Adinkra symbol (Ashanti in origin) for life change or transformation.

Figure 3

Stages to Lewin's System Level Model for Change (Hussain et al., 2018)



Unfreezing. Lewin's (1947) unfreezing stage of the change model is focused on unfreezing current systems in readiness for change (Rosenbaum et al., 2018). In combination with positive scholarship (Cameron et al., 2003), unfreezing requires employee involvement (Glew et al., 1995; Hussain et al., 2018). Employee involvement seeks to increase organization members' decision-making input, and directly correlates to high quality change potential (Vroom & Yetton, 1973). Positive organizational scholarship (POS) is a lens from which models of change can be explored, and it is focused on the human condition. POS is not a model for change but is instead a positive perspective of human potential (Cameron & Dutton, 2003; Cameron et al., 2003). Unfreezing from a POS point of view tasks organizational leaders with creating a

space where leadership is distributed and employees feel empowered to contribute (Mathieu et al., 2006), are motivated to share ideas, are trusted to be innovative, and are committed to implementing change (Cummings et al., 2016; Cummings & Molly, 1977; Hussain et al., 2018, Morgan & Zeffane, 2003).

When focused on the human factor or POS, the unfreezing stage of change can also be associated with change readiness (Bernerth, 2004). Readiness refers to individual attitudes (Bouckenooghe, 2010; Çalışkan & Gökalp, 2020; B. J. Weiner et al., 2020) and requires leaders to develop conditions necessary for the changing stage and the implementation of new systems, structures, practices or policies (Shea et al., 2014). For the purposes of this study, readiness for change may be measured through change receptivity. *Change receptivity* is defined by its capability to bring about organizational change (Frahm & Brown, 2007), beginning with how willing a person or group is to change (Frahm & Brown, 2007; Pettigrew et al., 2001). In this context, willingness is an individual or supra-personal attitudinal preparedness to pursue social justice aligned dispositional domains (Fortner et al., 2021; Shields, 2019, 2020).

When researching change readiness, Shea et al. (2014) recommended researchers consider (a) group referenced items, (b) multiple respondents from various group or team levels, and (c) interrater agreement. This iteration of the research in the current study was focused on individual leadership readiness and used to determine average leadership readiness across the state of NC. Thus, the current study used a combination of individual and group referenced items and was focused on multiple respondents from limited levels of school leadership, considering the concordance of rater responses.

Movement. Once unfrozen and in a state of readiness for change, the organization moves to a ‘during the change’ process or movement. Movement is the stage for change implementation

in which Rosenbaum et al. (2018) shared compliance, strategic proactivity, and efficiency are addressed. Others like Hussain et al. (2018) suggested, during this state of fluidity, "additional information must be considered to adapt these steps to specific situations" (p. 143). For example, incorporating POS to movement—employee involvement from unfreezing—leadership and the leader's knowledge sharing become critical components to this stage. When using motivation theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) in a unified model for educational change, the process and implementation of change must consider factors "influencing the work practices of the people involved" (Cryer et al., 1990, p. 78).

Motivation theory (Herzberg et al., 1959) is considered an effective content theory surrounding job satisfaction (Dion, 2006). In it, a series of motivational (i.e., intrinsic to a job and necessary to satisfaction) and hygiene (i.e., extrinsic to a job and helps to identify job dissatisfaction) factors are identified. These factors include advancement, work itself, possibility of growth, responsibility, recognition, and achievement as motivational factors; and interpersonal relationship, salary, politics and administration, supervision, and working conditions as hygiene factors (Alshmemri et al., 2017; Herzberg et al., 1959). The Freirean approach to this stage would characterize it as acting on imagination/liberation/revolutionary hope (Giroux & McLaren, 1997) in a move toward possibility/happiness/freedom (Freire, 1970/2005).

Refreezing. The final stage of Lewin's model for change is focused on sustainability (i.e., sustaining the change; Rosenbaum et al., 2018). Because radical imagination (Freire, 1970/2005; Giroux, 2013; Greene, 1995; Khasnabish & Haiven, 2014; Spector, 2017) is not bound by time, a Freirean approach to change becomes one where the present can be "[made] at will whatever it chooses" (Arendt, 1982, p. 80). Therefore, this makes the refreezing stage one where an imagined future becomes present and real, and remains as such.

Summary

The adoption of neoliberal education efforts, including high stakes testing and accountability practices, perpetuates dominant ideals and reinforces a hegemony of knowledge, resulting in the marginalization of nondominant ideals and external knowledge sources (Freire, 1970/2005; Bell, 1994). Neglecting students' experiences, identities, and diverse forms of knowledge in the educational system contributes to the persistence of inequitable access to resources and opportunities (Freire, 1970/2005). To address these challenges, an education transformation rooted in social justice requires recognition and responsiveness to the unique needs and experiences of individuals and communities. This necessitates a humanistic leadership approach cultivating a culture of learning, community, and equity, while acknowledging the influence of race, racism, and socioeconomic disparities (Shields, 2010). This approach entails creating nurturing environments, valuing students' inner emotions, and fostering self-reflection and openness.

CHAPTER 2.1

LITERATURE REVIEW: HISTORICAL CONNECTION

Education and racial oppression share a bond (Diamond & Gomez, 2023; Givens, 2021; Woodson, 1933) and history. Subchapters 2.1, 2.2., and 2.3 historize oppression and racial inequality in the Antebellum South, particularly in North Carolina (NC). This history helps to contextualize education in NC prior to *Leandro*. This history makes connections between race and education in NC. This history links education in NC to critical theory.

By providing a historical connection between race and racism to systemic factors present in the education complex in NC (Subsections 2.1 and 2.2). The following subsections provide a comprehensive literature review reflecting the current state of research and literature on educational equity and receptivity for transformation (Subsection 2.3). Chapter 2.3 provides a review of literature on the dispositions of administrators in NC schools. It makes a case for the racial origins of NC's problem concerning opportunity gaps (Subsections 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3).

A History of Systemic Oppression

Oppression in the United States has been well documented and can be traced back to various court cases (Anderson, 1988/2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006). From before *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) to after B*rown v. Board of Education* (1954), dozens of cases have challenged inequitable educational practices in the United States and reached the Supreme Court. Such cases include *Ward v. Flood* (1872) concerning a Black mother named Harriet Ward who wanted her daughter to attend a White public school and was denied enrollment and the *Pasadena City Board of Education v. Spangler* (1976) case where it was determined evidence of "racial imbalance or segregation in the student bodies" (para. 13) existed and provided the district with a court-ordered integration plan.

Other incidents such as the 1901 alliance between Northern White businessmen and Southern White school officials shaping and influencing Black education for decades to come (Anderson, 1978) never made it to the Supreme Court but were upheld through local policy. This alliance for Black education reform, which appeared to support the negro's education and freedom through business ventures, would move forward in legislation because of its immense support by influencers like railroad entrepreneur, Baldwin (Anderson, 1978, 1988/2010). The alliance seemed to promise an end to racially engendered generational poverty in areas such as North Carolina. The propaganda asserted by northerners and supported by White southerners at the time was freedom for Black southerners obtained through education (Anderson & Kharem, 2009), but freedom could only be reached through vocational training in industrial schools. Black communities could access free education but education would train these communities to pursue the role of laborer (Anderson, 1988/2010).

Prior to establishing itself as an independent nation, the United States participated and willingly reinforced racist and oppressive ideals through the slave trade (Feagin, 2013; Hilliard, 2014). Indeed, from the transatlantic slave trade and the criminalization of literacy for enslaved Black people (Anderson, 1988/2010) to the proliferation of industrial schools as an intentional pathway for White economic supremacy (Anderson, 1988/2010; McCarty, 2018; Rosales, 1996), Black communities in the south have historically been marginalized, underrepresented, or excluded from opportunities. To the cultural persecutions continuing to this day because of race, oppressive structures, and unconscious bias (Benson & Fiarman, 2020), whether perpetuated collectively or individually (Ryan, 1976; Singleton, 2014), freedom and education for Black people in the South has had a turbulent history (Anderson, 1988/2010). Anderson (1988/2010) wrote, "[from the 1880s to the mid-1930s,] southern local and state governments [including

North Carolina] . . . refused to provide public high school facilities for black children . . . [By the early 1930s,] Afro Americans were generally excluded from the U.S. and southern transformation of public secondary education. . . until after World War II" (pp. 186, 187–188, 193). Resistance to progress for the education of Black people in North Carolina (Roy & Ford, 2019) by White southerners made it so even postslavery could not remove the stain of racial and financial inequities throughout North Carolina's educational journey.

Prompted by a separate but equal verdict (*Plessy v. Ferguson*, 1896), a legacy in public education for Black people was solidified by exclusionary practices (physical and financial) of Jim Crow (Bonilla-Silva & Ashe, 2014; Pilgrim, 2015; Roy & Ford, 2019). Permissive oppression formed by race in the South permitted many southern states, including NC, to not fund universal secondary schooling for Black students in the South until the latter half of the 20th century (Anderson, 1988/2010), thus limiting opportunities for educational advancement and success. The history of education in southern states like NC, sustained through philanthropists, was cemented by southern White separatists who subjugated and controlled the Black communities in the South and triggered decades of legal battles and policy changes (Newsreel, 2015). With this history, Southern Black Americans have unsurprisingly continued to face racial and socioeconomic disparities at home and in school, thereby influencing their access and opportunities for success and educational achievement.

Impact of Slave Trades

Unlike many previous researchers (i.e., Bockstette et al., 2002; Gennaioli & Rainer, 2007; Herbst, 2000; Manning, 1990; Michalopoulos & Papaioannou, 2013), Nunn's (2008) body of work focused on the colonial period to trace the economic and institutional development of Africa. Using slave exports (normalized by a country's land area) between 1400 and 1900 from

every African country, and real per capita gross domestic product, Nunn (2008) quantitatively concluded the slave trade's impact on Africa's economic development. Without slave trades, the average income gap between Africa and the rest of the world would be reduced by 72%. Without the slave trade, this same income gap would be reduced by 99% between Africa and other developing countries. These findings concluded that without slave trades, Africa development would be like Latin America or Asia. These findings helped to legitimize the impact history has had on Africa's contemporary economic challenges. Nunn (2017) shared Whatley and Gillezeau (2011) and Whatley (2014) measured slave trade impact on institutional quality and ethnic diversity. Green (2015) capitalized on this research to explore and conclude slave trade had a strong impact on ethnic fractionalization. This combined body of work and more has linked slave trades between Africa and the world, which included the United States, to existing racial inequities.

In focusing on the slave trade period, Bertocchi (2015) incorporated race as a factor impacting economic status; specifically, whether the slave trade "influenced the accumulation of human capital and its unequal distribution across racial groups" (p. 2). The research was completed using historical, demographic, economic, and social data across distribution charts. Bertocchi compared the United States and Latin America in exploring the relationship between education and income in areas around the world affected by the slave trade. Findings suggest although regionally based, existing global racial inequities have existed since and in direct correlation to the transatlantic slave trade. Furthermore, a key conclusion is the institution of slave labor and contemporary educational outcomes, and income inequality are inextricably linked. That is, current income and educational inequities have been connected to subjugated histories. Furthermore, Bertocchi suggested income equalization can benefit over time from

having countries create and design policies eliminating racially driven education inequalities in school.

If, as Nunn (2017) concluded, the more exports of slaves indirectly impacted the prosperity of nations (in the form of human capital and economic wealth), then the greatest imports signaled the greatest prosperity. The combined research findings from Green (2015) and Bertocchi (2015) instead suggest such prosperity is linked to race. The economic decline impacting African nations carried over to their enslaved brethren. Applying this body of work to a country like the United States, more specifically to the Antebellum South, and its history of enslavement, annihilation, segregation, exclusion, and oppression, assumes the slave trade also negatively impacted (and has continued to impact) economic gaps and educational inequities between White Americans and those of African descent.

Discomforts of Acts Against Inequities in a Racialized Environment

With the resurgence of *Leandro* hearings, NC State Board of Education (SBE) goals around opportunity gaps, and SBE objectives around reform and support for schools designed low-performing, NC has experienced the discomforts of change. The state has been in the process of implementing practices in education to address racial inequalities in their goal to eliminate opportunity gaps. By addressing racial and educational inequities in school through policy changes, NC may be on the cusp of improving educational outcomes and racial inequities positively influencing income distributions. At a minimum, Bertocchi's (2015) results affirmed education in the United States has existed and functioned in a racialized environment since slavery.

According to Bonilla-Silva (1997, 2001, 2015), characteristics of a racialized social system include:

1) Racism embedded in the structure of a society,
2) Racism as a psychology fundamentally organized around a material reality (i.e., racism has a "material foundation"),
3) Racism changes over time,
4) Racism has a "rationality" (actors support or resist a racial order in numerous ways because they believe doing so is beneficial to them),
5) Overt, covert, and normative racialized behaviors (following the racial etiquette of a racial order) are all paths "racial subjects" (Goldberg, 1997) have in any society, and
6) Racism has a contemporary foundation and is not a mere remnant of the past. (pp. 25–36)

A racialized environment or system is one in which racism is complex and oftentimes rationalized to defend unjust policies, structures, or events, embedding it in the system's fabric and thus normalizing it (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Milner, 2007). As is the characteristic of racialized environments, racism does not simply exist as a remnant of the past, it is dynamic, complex, and ingrained in social contemporary practices (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Hughey et al., 2015). This dissertation focused on education in NC and provided a glimpse into the state's racialized past and its continued rationalization in the present.

The following subchapter includes a glimpse into the racialized past of NC began with a brief history of education in the state as described through literature, with current event examples of NC's racialized environment and narrative accounts of the NC perspective (i.e., lived experience).

CHAPTER 2.2

LITERATURE REVIEW: A HISTORY OF SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION

In this subsection of Chapter 2, I provide an overview of education in North Carolina (NC) from its constitutional adoption of schools in 1776 to the Civil Rights movement. I also offer a series of quotes from the lived experiences of adults who attended and graduated from public schools in NC after integration of *Leandro*. Finally, examples of current events after *Leandro* across a handful of public-school districts in NC are shared. Together the literature, quotes, and current events provide a comprehensive context for the various policies, practices, and public sentiment surrounding education in NC.

A History of NC Public Education

> The white race has been almost wholly responsible for the creation, development and support of an educational system which has been and is now educating the Negro children of [NC], all of them.
>
> —Lefler, 1956, p. 502

Judge, legislator, and internal improvements advocate, Archibald Debow Murphey has been known in NC as the "father of common schools" for his role in establishing the state's public instruction system (Knight, 1916, p. 69). Knight (1916) wrote as early as 1776, NC adopted a constitutional provision copied from the Pennsylvania constitution, for "legislative establishment of schools and for a university" (p. 63). Once founded, the first university graduated its first class in 1798. Thus, the provision for a university was set in motion; however, disagreements and differing interpretations of the constitution held off the first public-school law until 1839. Knight attributed various conditions to the mandate as contributing factors to the struggle for free schools. Although some legislative leaders believed the establishment of schools

permitted the implementation of free-schools and subsequent taxation to fund them, others perceived a support of private schools fulfilled the demands of the state constitution.

As early as 1802, agitated appeals were made by a series of NC governors, like Governor Turner (1804), to seek for a universal plan for education that would educate the masses (Coon, 1908; Knight, 1916). The state of education in NC revealed before the Civil War, a lack of literacy and general knowledge existed across the state, particularly in rural parts (Battle, 1907; Knight, 1916). After decades (1776–1839) of failed votes, debate, and struggle, a department of public instruction and free schools were created in NC (Battle, 1907; Knight, 1916). Amid the enslavement of Black persons and a recent mass exodus of American natives in the Cherokee Trail of Tears (Bryant, 2008), NC opened its first public school in 1840.

Historian and author, Lefler, described NC during this colonial time as having "the highest rate of illiteracy of any state in the Union," which he blamed on insufficient funding and apathy (absence of receptivity) toward education (NCDPI, 1993, p. 7). Lefler (as cited by NCDPI, 1993) intimated the education of the masses of NC was slow even after the development of public schools. Newsome and Lefler (1973) shared despite boasting 3,500 public and private schools and seeing a decrease in illiteracy rates between 1840 and 1860 in a population of nearly 630,000 White persons, many under the age of 20 were illiterate, and approximately 70,000 over the age of 20 were illiterate. Newsome and Lefler (1973) indicated though Black persons comprised 27% of the total population at the time, nearly all were illiterate. Such facts are unsurprising because in 1818, as evidenced in revised code No. 105 (i.e., slaves and free persons of color) under the act concerning slaves and persons of color, literacy was illegal for enslaved and free Black persons in NC (NC General Assembly, 1831/2002).

Coon (1908) suggested for years prior to the establishment of universal schooling, NC appeared to take a prejudiced approach to education, resulting in “do nothing” policies and “inaction” by the legislature (p. xii). Some people in the legislature perceived education was squandered on certain populations such as those living in rural communities and tending to farms. The assumed conclusion was if free schools are for the masses and provide access to literacy for all, and education is wasted on those who could not otherwise afford it, then state funding for free schools is unnecessary. Separated by politics and governed by educational prejudices, the state of NC has faced decades of legislative taxation since 1790 for pseudo internal improvement efforts and inequitable education policies.

In 1824, a Resolution to Prepare a Plan or System of Public Education was passed by the NC General Assembly. This resolution was followed by an Act to Create a Fund for the Establishment of Common Schools, which was passed by the General Assembly in 1826. Subsequent acts concerning Common Schools in NC were passed over the next several decades, including the 1852 Act to Appoint a Superintendent of Common Schools, the 1869 Act to Provide for a System of Public Instruction, and the 1877 Act to Establish Normal Schools in the State and more. Meanwhile, Black North Carolinians experienced oppression and imprisonment. During this time of common school proliferation, free Black or previously enslaved persons arrested for various nonviolent crimes like stealing a chicken helped build NC railroads as a condition of convict leasing that would eventually lay their bodies to rest in mass graves across western parts of NC (Boyle, 2022; Neufeld, 2019).

According to historical accounts and publications compiled by Coon (1908), NC had an early history of spending on itself, taxing its constituents, and providing minimal to no support for public education or intellectual progress even before efforts to abolish slavery were

successful. In 1829, during an Internal Improvement convention in Raleigh, Caldwell expressed NC was already centuries behind in the education of its people. At the time, counties like Edgecombe had to raise their own money to establish schools. In 1833, Governor Swain (Coon, 1908) said, in a message to the state legislature in response to expenditures made for education in NC, "Government can not be wisely administered, where those who direct the expenditure of the public treasure, receive more for this service than the amount of their disbursements" (p. 652).

The reality of the time, as shared in 1833 by Mr. Hinton of the Joint Committee on Internal Improvement, was "there is not a single class of citizens, which can be considered in a prosperous condition, [and that] intellectual advancement is retarded by poverty and listlessness" (as cited in Coon, 1908, p. 615). Two years later, Governor Swain shared in his message on education, no additional care was established in NC to "diffuse [the] elementary principles of education among the poor" (as cited in Coon, 1908, p. 713). In a testimony from Rev. A. J. Leavenworth in 1838, he stated, "We have probably 120 thousand children between the ages of 5 and 15 years, who are destitute of a common school education" (as cited in Coon, 1908, p. 813). Finally, free schools in NC were taking shape through various legislative acts and establishments such as the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE) created in 1857 for White educators and the North Carolina Teachers Association (NCTA) in 1880 for Black educators, which became an integrated NCAE in 1970, were taking shape.

As the state was segregated, services such as access to municipal drinking water service and schooling supplied to White neighborhoods often did not extend to support Black neighborhoods of the same city (MacDonald Gibson et al., 2014; Wilson et al., 2020). In response to White oppression, Black communities created their own towns, businesses, and schools (Franklin, 2002; Purifoy & Seamster, 2021). For example, the town of Princeville was

founded and incorporated by freed slaves in Edgecombe County in 1885 (Mobley, 1986). Furthermore, Safe Bus Company was a Black-owned transportation company operating in Winston Salem, NC between 1926 and 1972 (Ford & Ford, 2022; North Carolina Transportation Museum, 2020). According to the NC Transportation Museum, Safe Bus was the largest Black-owned and operated transportation company in the world by 1968 until the city's transit authority purchased its assets. NC not only boasted competitive Black-owned businesses but also possessed Black friendly cities like Durham. For example, W.E.B. Dubois (1912) wrote about Durham, stating:

> Today there is a singular group in Durham where a black man may get up in the morning from a mattress made by black men, in a house which a black man built out of lumber which black men cut and planed; he may put on a suit which he bought at a colored haberdashery and socks knit at a colored mill; he may cook victuals from a colored grocery on a stove which black men fashioned; he may earn his living working for colored men, be sick in a colored hospital, and buried from a colored church; and the Negro insurance society will pay his widow enough to keep his children in a colored school. This is surely progress. (p. 338)

In 1925 during the Negro State Fair in Raleigh, Governor McLean declared the South to no longer have a "race problem" (Crow et al., 2002/2011, p. 134). This proclamation came upon the heels of Booker T. Washington calling Durham the Black Wallstreet of America. However, in Black towns or neighborhoods, Black communities continued to support the economic development of White America, including public schooling for white students through double taxation (Anderson, 1988/2010; Franklin, 2002; Purifoy & Seamster, 2021). Double taxation refers to the direct and indirect taxes paid by Black people to fund public education (Anderson,

1988/2010). Although most of the taxes paid by Black people were used to pay for White public schools, Black communities were forced to privately fund their own schools. For example, NC opened its first publicly funded high school in 1907, and yet a decade later, the state possessed no public Black high schools (Anderson, 1988/2010). Furthermore, even as late as 1938, White and Black teachers experienced a salary gap of 25%–30% (Crow et al., 2002/2011, p. 136). In the face of racism and oppression as evidenced by race riots (e.g., Wilmington insurrection of 1898) and segregationist laws (e.g., Jim Crow era laws which legalized racial segregation, *Plessy v. Ferguson*), NC's Black communities sought and fought for political and economic emancipation (Purifoy & Seamster, 2021; Slocum, 2019). However, racial inequity persisted.

By the end of WWII, the state saw a need for vocational and technical education and as such, focused its efforts on a statewide system of community colleges as the nation faced desegregation efforts (Fountain & Latta, 1990). In response to *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), a Governor's Specialty Advisory Committee on Education was created at the request of Governor Umstead (Cash, 2014). In 1955, the Pupil Assignment Act was enacted. Both the Governor's Special Committee were deliberate attempts by NC to uphold school segregation (Cash, 2014; Crow et al., 2002/2011). The Act was the state's show of compliance with the *Brown* decision (Crow et al., 2002/2011). It removed references to race from policy and shifted the responsibility of school desegregation from the state board to local school boards. The Pupil Assignment Act of 1955 signaled the state's shift to local control still present at the time of this study.

Pearsall, an attorney and politician who ran the Governor's Specialty Advisory Committee on Education, released the *Pearsall Plan to Save Our Schools* in 1956. The plan supported an amendment to the NC Constitution for the State legislature to "pass the necessary

laws to protect the people against unacceptable mixing of the races" (Pearsall et al., 1956). These laws included changes such as (a) the option for a community to shut down a public school based on a popular vote if school efforts were considered intolerable, (b) grants to change schools when families who object to their student attending an integrated school educational expense, and (c) protections against truancy, for students not able to access a segregated school experience (Pearsall et al., 1956). For years, Black families fought its legality. Unlike the 1955 Pupil Act, which has continued to be part of the state constitution, parts of Pearsall's plan were declared unconstitutional in 1966 before ultimately being repealed in 1971 (Peebles-Wilkins, 1987).

Despite the state's governing body's resistance to desegregation, NC was only one of four southern states to permit integrated schools (Batchelor, 2015). This progress was driven by the local school boards of Greensboro, Charlotte, and Winston-Salem who voted for it in 1957. Possibly related, Greensboro later became a site in NC with Black Panther adherents. Additionally, Charlotte formed an Afro American Unity Organization, and Winston-Salem, housed the state's (and South's) only Panther chapter recognized by Oakland party headquarters.

The Winston-Salem, North Carolina chapter of the Black Panther Party, offered multiple programs to its community like a free breakfast for children program. It offered multiple services such as ambulance service and classes in Black consciousness. The chapter also offered resources such as free clothing. Beginning with sit-ins in 1960, the Civil Rights movement created a pathway to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1965, the Coleman Report in 1966, the Fair Housing Act in 1968, and more. Still, local boards' rights to local choice and control provided by the Pupil Assignment Act, kept NC schools partially segregated (Chafe, 1981). *Green v. New Kent County* (1968), in the neighboring state of Virginia, questioned local control when it ruled freedom of choice (i.e., local control)

does not surpass a state's legal responsibilities regarding school integration (Chafe, 1981). With the Pearsall plan repealed in 1971, the state finally moved toward complete desegregation and integration during the 1970s (Currie, 2005; Peebles-Wilkins, 1987).

Regardless of the efforts to establish equitable education for all students, debates and appeals on public instruction to meet the needs of children have continued in NC. For example, a statement was issued in November 2022 by the Supreme Court of NC on the ruling upholding the state constitution on the rights of children (*Leandro v. the State*). The majority opinion stated:

> [In] response to decades of inaction by other branches of state government, the judiciary must act . . . [The Court] can no longer patiently wait for the day, year, or decade when the State gets around to acting on its constitutional duty 'to guard and maintain' the constitutional rights of North Carolina schoolchildren. (*Hoke Cnty. Bd. of Educ. v. State*, para. 4)

Various statements by politicians, lawmakers, educators, and community leaders such as the one from the NC Supreme Court, have existed for decades in NC. Each reveals part of a larger story of a state in agitation as it pertains to public education. Indeed, with its journey to establish free schools, it appears even now, NC continues to grapple in its implementation of free and equitable schooling for all K–12 learners.

Although changes to popular opinion and policy may provide more concrete educational shifts in NC, history suggests change requires intentionality and perseverance. Change is not immediate. It took 15 years for Pearsall's plan to be repealed. In 2024, *Leandro* celebrates 30 years since districts and families petitioned to sue NC in a fight for the right to quality education. Because advocacy for social justice is not in the short-term effort, a change for equity and freedom requires leaders possess the drive and moral courage for change (Shields, 2010).

Change begins with the intent to shift the mindsets of individuals or groups and is enacted with time and through movement (Lewin, 1947). For example, the movement on the struggle for free schools was set into motion by the release of legislative reports in 1817. This included one report by Walker (2000) and another more elaborate report by Murphey (1816).

Walker's (2000) report offered recommendations for the training of teachers and the education of economically disadvantaged populations. The other more elaborate report by Murphey (1816) provided skeptics with a *how*; Murphey offered a plan incorporating best practices of education systems across the nation and Europe. Murphey's comprehensive plan for schools outlined the establishment of a state board, state universities, methods for teaching, a standard course of study for primary schools, the selection of teachers, education for disabled children, academies, and more (Coon, 1908; Knight, 1916). Although it took another 2 decades to be funded and approved for implementation, Murphey's plan set into motion what would become the foundation for the NC system of public instruction.

Lived Experiences of Education in NC

Designs in education research apply an interpretivist perspective (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002; Wilson & Anagnostopoulos, 2021). Such an approach to social reality, often found in qualitative research, addresses how humans make sense (Weick, 1995) of the social world, and use lived experience (Turner & Bruner, 1986; i.e., descriptive first accounts) to discover "theoretical *truth* and *reality*" (Swanson & Holton, 2005, p. 358). Lived experiences refers to the unique and diverse firsthand experiences of individuals shaping their perspectives and understanding of the world. Lived experiences are essential for developing a deeper understanding of the complexity of educational phenomena (Lather, 2013).

An exploration of the first-person accounts of education in NC along with current event

accounts can help make sense of and further contextualize the problem of racial educational inequity and opportunity gaps in NC (Weick, 1995). For example, initiatives for educational change and innovation in NC often result in the implementation of some form of educational reform. A NC state approved reform model is Restart. A Restart school is a traditional (i.e., public, non-charter brick and mortar K–12) school under its assigned district, operating with the same exemptions from statutes and rules as a charter school. The Restart model of reform essentially permits a traditional public school to operate like a charter school.

People perceive charter systems can provide the innovations needed to address the low-performance problem in traditional public schools in NC. In the SBE's strategic plan, Restart reform is supported by Goal 2, Objective 7, Component 1. Goal 2 of the SBE is to "improve school and district performance," and Objective 7 of this goal is to "increase the number of schools meeting or exceeding growth measure by subgroup," and Component 1 describes "increasing the percentage of schools with charter-like flexibilities . . . meeting or exceeding annual expected growth" (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2019, p. 1). These exemptions are referred to as charter-like flexibilities and they provide approved schools with creative license (in limit) to address barriers to student achievement.

An example of a charter-like flexibility is *employment requirement* flexibility. Although Bromberg (2016) stated schools serving mostly Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) students are less likely to have highly qualified teachers, employment requirement flexibility further permits schools designated as low-performing or recurring-low-performing to hire up to 50% of a teaching staff without licensure, or who are licensed in a different content or grade span than the one they are teaching. Furthermore, this allowance does not require the teaching staff hired under employment requirement flexibility to enter and complete a licensure pathway. By

ignoring systemic inequities like the correlation between novice teachers and high poverty schools (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2012; Rice, 2010), it appears school leadership support efforts through reform or improvement in NC are at best misplaced.

To contextualize public education in NC as part of this literature review, five adult participants with a graduation year between the mid-1980s to the late 1990s were informally interviewed. During brief semistructured interviews, participants shared their lived experiences as students in public education in NC. Their truth provides a first-person narrative on the impact school, district or state initiatives, policies and practices had on students prior to *Leandro*.

Lived Experience Example 1

According to a report by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (1977), the 1970s were marked by significant changes and improvements in public school education in NC. This is because prior to the 1970s, NC had a segregated school system with separate schools for White and Black students. However, in 1971, a court-ordered desegregation plan was put into effect that mandated the integration of public schools. This process was often contentious, with resistance from some White parents who were opposed to their children attending integrated schools. As a result, bussing was used to transport students to schools in different neighborhoods to achieve racial balance.

Kendra moved to NC from Illinois and began her educational journey in NC in the sixth grade. She attended two middle schools but completed sixth through eighth grade in the Western region of NC. Kendra identified as a White female and shared, “I felt like I took a big jump down” in her move to NC. In fact, for Kendra, “sixth grade was just weird.” She shared:

> I did see a lot of students with disabilities that year because sometimes they’d let me go read in person to some of the kids instead of just reading them on tape. So that way I

> wasn't sitting in a room by myself. So I did spend some time with kids who, um, couldn't read or who were behind on things.

She added:

> Most of my sixth-grade year I spent reading textbooks on tape because I already knew all the materials. So they'd give me my work for the month and I'd finish it up, and then I'd have the rest of the month to read on tape for the school. And I hope they've demolished those tapes since then. (Kendra, 2023, 1:15)

After middle school, Kendra moved to one of the top five largest school districts in the Piedmont Triad region. Kendra stated:

> And then in 10th grade I moved over here to [K. High], which was just a 9–10thh school in the middle of downtown where you could smell the tobacco and the bread making all at the same time. It was kind of gross.

In addition to desegregation, the 1970s saw changes in curriculum and teaching methods. The state began to implement a new program called the Basic Education Program (BEP), which aimed to provide a more comprehensive and integrated education for students. This included a focus on individualized instruction, critical thinking skills, and a more diverse range of subjects.

Although this was a time of integration efforts leading to the mass bussing of students, bussing to implement integration efforts, did necessarily translate to the classroom. Kendra wrote:

> Well, they were still busing back, back then. That's why they were doing the 2 years everywhere. So the kids from Clemmons got bused into town . . . for Grades 9–10. Then the kids from town got bussed out [for Grades 11–12] . . . There was an in-town group and then a suburb group and you just took turns going in town and out of town. So, 2

> years you spent, you know, in the neighborhood where there were colored people and then the next 2 years you spent in the neighborhood where there weren't colored people but the colored people got bussed to you or you got bussed the colored people.

Lived Experiences Examples 2 and 3

Between the 1980s and 1990s, NC led some of the most impactful reform efforts in the nation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010). Public school education in NC during the 1980s continued to be shaped by the changes and reforms begun in the previous decade. The 1980s saw a continued emphasis on improving the quality of education for all students, with a focus on accountability, standards, and assessment. One of the major developments in the 1980s was the implementation of the Basic Skills Testing Program (BSTP), which aimed to ensure all students in NC were proficient in reading and math. The BSTP was later replaced by the NC Competency Tests in the late 1980s, which tested students in a wider range of subjects. In addition to assessment and accountability, the 1980s saw a continued push for teacher professional development and support. The report noted the state provided funding for a variety of teacher training programs and professional development opportunities, including the establishment of regional teacher centers. The 1980s also saw the introduction of new educational technologies, such as computers and video equipment, into classrooms. This allowed for greater flexibility in teaching methods and curriculum delivery.

Connor was born and raised in NC and identified as a White man. He completed his entire PK–12 experience in the Piedmont Triad region of NC. He began in rural area schools. In response to his elementary school experience, Conner remembered, "There always [were] activities, whether they were inside in the gym, outside, there was always something going on in the classroom, doing something that was hands-on. And maybe that's just the nature of

kindergarten, first, second, third grade." Upon transitioning to secondary school, Connor moved to the city. Specific to his middle school experience, Connor shared, "It was interesting because I was bused outta my district . . . And so that was probably my introduction to being immersed in Black community and Black culture." Like Connor, Erika experienced bussing. Erika was originally from a small town in New York and identified as a Black woman. She started NC schools in seventh grade and continued until university, living predominantly in the North Central region of the state. Erika shared:

> [Middle] school was predominantly white. However, because of the way they did student assignments, students were assigned from other neighborhoods and bused in. . . . At the time, the [public] school system [was] doing a lot of trial and error, trying different ways to [have] racially balanced schools.

Although both Connor and Erika graduated high school in the late 1980s or early 1990s, their lived experience of integration efforts were at various levels of integration across the state. Schools were still predominantly one ethnicity or race. Families who did not wish to integrate enrolled in private schools. Connor attended an alternative high school for a few months in ninth grade before being transferred to a historically Black high school where he graduated. Alternative schools also experienced bussing but the curriculum was different from traditional public schools. For example, Connor shared:

> [School] started at 7:35 [and] got out at noon, which was amazing. I love that. But the school was really rough. You had to have a badge too, and you had to punch in a time clock. . . . I remember they had game rooms, and you could earn credits to go to the game room and play. [Also] they didn't have traditional lunch. You could either go home or stay there and get lunch. If you got lunch, you missed the bus.

Once at the traditional high school, both Connor and Erika played sports and appreciated several other opportunities beyond the classroom. Connor explained:

> There were all the types of clubs. . . . I had drama all 4 years. And I was in all the plays every year. I actually graduated with a little stamp on my high school diploma, the International Thespian Society. . . . There was drama club, I don't know, beta club, like you name it. There was a choice there.

Lived Experience Example 4

NC extended its implementation of a BEP, which outlined a comprehensive curriculum schedule for students. The curriculum included "the arts, communication, media and computer skills, second languages" (NCDPI, 1993, p. 21). In the 1990s, public school education in NC continued to build upon the changes and reforms of the previous decades. The 1990s saw a continued focus on accountability and assessment. One of the major developments in the 1990s was the introduction of the NC end-of-grade (EOG) tests, which were implemented in 1993 to assess student performance in reading, math, and other subjects. The EOG tests were later expanded to include science and social studies. The 1990s also saw a renewed focus on providing a more diverse and inclusive curriculum, with the implementation of the NC Standard Course of Study (SCOS). The SCOS provided a framework for teaching a wider range of subjects and skills, including technology, foreign languages, and cultural diversity.

In a description of the activities available to them, an individual named Rema, who graduated high school between the mid to late 1990s, shared:

> I was at school, I stayed after school at the library to do whatever schoolwork I had. I had track; and if it wasn't track season, I did theater and if it wasn't theater season, I volunteered at the literacy council.

Regarding the surrounding community, Rema also shared, “I walked to the library. I often did that. I remember the library barely having, like, the books stopped at a certain year because they basically had like, donations are welcome because they had no money.” Rema was a biracial woman identifying as a Black woman. She attended school in NC from 10th–12th grade.

Charter schools in NC were first established in the 1990s. The first charter school in the state opened in 1997, and by the end of the decade, there were 34 charter schools operating across the state. By 2021, the number increased 6 times to 204. The NCDPI (1993) report of the history of education in NC/ also noted the 1990s saw a continued emphasis on teacher training and professional development, with the establishment of new programs such as the NC Teacher Academy. Also at this time, students faced more rigorous graduation expectations than was previously required in NC, school improvement efforts required parent and teacher voice, and accountability changes ushered in an EOG testing program for elementary and middle school grade levels (NCDPI, 1993, 2022). This began in third grade and continued to require grade level testing up to the eighth grade. Although NC was hailed for its educational policies for student performance (Oaks et al., 2019), resources and opportunities differed from county to county. For example, Rema described her move from one county in the Sandhills region to a neighboring county. She stated:

> Coming to [County A], it was starkly White at the school and I lived in a Black neighborhood . . . there were more Black people though in the classes that I was in . . . [Alternatively in County B,]. . . . I could actually advocate for myself. . . . So when I needed help with college, . . . I got the information I [needed]. I don’t think I would’ve gotten that in [County A] at all.

Current Events for Education in NC

As seen by the public feedback[i] (see example in Appendix E) on multiple state driven plans such as the American Rescue Plan for submission to the U.S. department of education, NC has not been immune from the anti-critical race theory (CRT) rhetoric currently sweeping the nation. Racialized policies and politics such as anti-Black, anti-woke, anti-equity, and anti-discomfort politics reminiscent of the state's segregationist past have appeared to be permeating school districts and schools. Although not necessarily prevalent throughout the education complex of NC, two current events examples illustrate events in NC schools after the COVID-19 global pandemic. These incidents provide a glimpse into the anti-Black rhetoric across the state.

Black Classmates Auctioned as Slaves

News of a mock slave auction at a K–8 public school in the North Central region of NC made headlines across multiple news stations, including CNN, in March 2022 (Blanford, 2022). The news shared White students pretended to sell Black classmates for U.S. dollars and in creating scales of sale, provided reasoning for price decisions (Blanford, 2022; Linly, 2022; Lynch, 2022). In a 2022 Facebook post originating in NC, a mother shared that her son experienced an auction where his Black classmate was placed at auction and sold by a white classmate for $350 who was playing the role of slavemaster. In the same post, the parent shared video proof of these auctions where students chanted racial epithets.

Although this practice had occurred throughout the school year, students remained silent and continued the practice even when it required verbal abuse including racial epithets or physical aggression like acts of shoving or hitting. The mock auction, clear subjugation of one race over another and stemming from racist histories, was a normal set of behaviors for involved students. An investigation soon ensued and although staff members were present during mock

auctions, the school district rationalized no adult was responsible for these student-driven behaviors (Blanford, 2022; Linly, 2022; Lynch, 2022). As a result, disciplinary actions for adults were nonexistent. A follow-up post on social media from the parent who broke the story indicated some students received no more than one day of out-of-school suspension because of their actions.

Disagreements During a Local Board Review of Policy and Practice

During a review of their district strategic plan in 2022, local board members struggled to come to an agreement around the plan's goals. The district was in what the SBE has categorized as the Sandhills region of the state, near its southern area. At the onset of the review, three members petitioned the school district to review its vision and mission statements to include a statement that the district aimed to graduate "proud Americans" (Murphy, 2022, para. 26). According to a local online news article, two board members took issue with what they called "divisive, woke language" (Murphy, 2022, para. 4) in the plan. For example, recruitment strategies that called for diversity hiring efforts were spurned by some members. In an exchange of ideas during the session, a board member stated, "If you are doing an affirmative action minority hiring program, by definition — this isn't me saying it — you are not hiring the best" and are they are "making a conscious effort" to do so (Murphy, 2022, para. 26).

Additionally, a discussion on the district's objectives with discipline and mental health prompted a proclamation stating minority students were typically poorer students and poorer students were typically less disciplined. The argument stated some of the district's strategies dismissed parental responsibility and mental health initiatives should be left to health officials and not to a school district. Finally, a different member shared concerns about the singling out for support of subgroups (e.g., economically disadvantaged students [EDS], English language

learners, minority racial groups) as defined and categorized by NCDPI. The goal in question concerned closing the district's achievement gap. The member argued such educational jargon was unclear and suggested the district was setting a different standard for different students rather than seeking achievement efforts for "all" students (Murphy, 2022).

At least two board members for this district were associated with Education First Alliance (EFA). EFA is a statewide parental rights organization with conservative concerns surrounding education in NC (Masten, 2022). According to the Charlotte Observer, for example, an image of these members and friends was included as part of an online post titled "inspiring Republicans to declare war on Leftist educators and their enablers in local and state government" (Masten, 2022, para. 17). The EFA has often taken a stance on behalf of White parents and educators and has publicly accused a Black male SBE member who has openly commended CRT to address racism of being a "Marxist who hates America, law enforcement, women" (Rachmuth, 2021, para. 8). Indeed, search engine searches of terms such as woke indoctrination, CRT, and racism in the context of public education in NC immediately yields multiple newsreels detailing current concerns among various communities. Concerns around woke education and CRT have appeared in multiple districts in NC. CRT has also been brought up in local board meetings in public school districts in the Western and Northwest regions of NC (Barrett, 2021; Miller, 2022).

Summary

In reading through the various manuscripts, letters, and official artifacts printed in Coon's (1908) documentary history of NC's public education, Knight's (1916) book on the history of public education in NC, and Crow et al.'s (2002/2011) book of the history Black people in NC and from recent events and shared lived experiences, there is a sense of political agreement over the years on the value of education, whether free or purchased. Conversely, these same accounts

suggest the public and political debate concerning education in NC centered and may still center around who has a right to education, who *should* be educated, who education is not wasted on, what access looks like, whose responsibility it is to fund education, and who contributes to decisions on education.

CHAPTER 2.3

A HUMANIZING CRITICAL RACE FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP CHANGE

Critical Race Theory Research Studies

Research articles such as those from P.A. Smith (2019) and Theoharis (2007), as identified in Table 3, have focused on critical theory. These studies have typically used qualitative methods or included a review of collected articles highlighting critical theories like CRT as a framework for analysis in education research.

Table 3

Literature Reviewed Using CRT as a Framework

Author (year)	Topic	Theoretical framework
Lynn et al. (2002)	Application of critical race theory to qualitative research in education	CRT
Milner (2013)	Influences of external forces like poverty on internal school forces, and exploring learning & teaching through CRT lens	CRT
Siddle-Walker and Johnson (2017)	Experiences of African American school leaders	CRT
Tate (1997)	Overview of critical race theory in education, including its historical roots, theoretical foundations, and implications	CRT
Ladson-Billings (1994)	The leadership dispositions of successful teachers of African American children	CRT; culturally relevant pedagogy
Warren and Mapp (2011)	Experiences of two educators of color in a predominantly white school district	CRT
Bedford and Shaffer (2023)	Preservice teachers employing CRT in the classroom	CRT
Nam et al. (2022)	How teachers negotiate their roles as diversity, equity, and inclusion facilitators	CRT
Ladson-Billings (1995)	Insights into culturally relevant pedagogy and creating inclusive and equitable educational environments informing leadership practices	Culturally relevant pedagogy, CRT; culturally responsive pedagogy

Author (year)	Topic	Theoretical framework
Parker and Villalpando (2007)	Adopting a racialized perspective on leadership to help uncover the hidden racial biases and structures perpetuating inequality	CRT
Smith (2019)	Racialized experiences of school principals	Black Masculine Caring; CRT; culturally relevant and responsive leadership; leadership for social justice
Theoharis (2007)	Social justice educational leadership and resistance	Social justice leadership; CRT; feminist theory
Dantley and Tillman (2006)	Social justice leadership as praxis	Social justice leadership; CRT; TLT

Unwanted Identities as Barriers to Policy Implementation

Foucault (1972/1980) stated knowledge is not value-neutral (i.e., devoid of subjective judgment or bias), it is influenced by power. Knowledge and power are inseparable and mutually constitutive, thereby rendering schooling an experiment in normalizing dominant ideologies. Aided by standardized testing, schooling is the "effect of a number of actual premeditated tactics operating in the grand strategies that ensure . . . domination" (Foucault, 1972/1980, p. 203).

If as Au (2016) suggested, "standardized testing has always been a racial project in the United States," (p. 43) then schooling in the United States is a racialized experiment. Au (2016) indicates that standardized testing was borrowed from French psychologist Alfred Binet who in 1904 introduced the Intelligence Quota (IQ) test as a means to "identify the presence of mild disabilities in young children" (p. 43). Au (2016, 2022) argued cognitive psychologists Henry Goddard, Lewis Terman, and Robert Yerkes distorted Binet's original work when they repurposed the IQ test as a tool to measure a person's fixed ability, which they also asserted is hereditary.

Au (2013, 2016) wrote the roots of standardized testing in the United States have always been associated with biases around race and culture. High stakes testing disproportionately affects marginalized students, perpetuates existing educational inequities, and reinforces structural racism (R. W. Solórzano, 2008). Furthermore, the original intent of standardized testing was to "[sort and rank] human populations by race, ethnicity, gender, and class according to supposedly inborn, biologically innate intelligence" (Au, 2016, p. 44). Such a history in testing suggested efforts from leadership to improve schools (e.g., exact educational change, reform, or transformation) focused on student performance data derived from standardized testing in the United States. Testing is bound to maintain dominant and racialized ideology. Nevertheless, school accountability heavily favors standardized testing, and school leaders are encouraged to make data-driven decisions based on the results of state-mandated tests (Booher-Jennings, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2008; Tienken, 2011; Weiss, 1998).

The very premise of objectivity in high stakes testing like standardized testing suggests data-driven decisions and subsequent school labeling are fair and reasonable. It inextricably links national and state test scores to student ability. Associating objectivity to standardized testing also disregards existing power dynamics between dominant racial groups in the United States and minority subgroups, whereby one group's culture and ideology dominates the other. This also implies test takers, regardless of race and economic status, are offered equitable opportunities for educational, social, and economic achievement. Such a connection gives credence to deficit ideologies in society interpreting achievement gaps measured by standardized testing between the dominant race and students of color in a context of 'deficit' and reinforces perceived pathologies stemming from racial stereotypes. As a result, this study bypassed typical

measures like state testing in its investigation of school leadership readiness for change or transformation.

Theoretical Foundation

Ladson-Billings (2021) provided a significant contribution to the humanizing framework as an approach recognizing the cultural experiences of students and their communities. This perspective acknowledges the role of power dynamics in the classroom and how it influences student learning outcomes. By incorporating this framework, a research question can address the dispositional and systemic factors acting as barriers or facilitators to school leaders. Building upon Ladson-Billings's (2021) work, CRT (Banks, 1995; Bell, 1992) further enhances the theoretical foundation. CRT recognizes the systemic inequalities existing in society, particularly regarding race and racism (Banks, 1995; Bell, 1992; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2021; Milner, 2010). It provides a lens through which to understand the impact of race on educational institutions and its effects on students, teachers, and administrators. A research question can thus explore the extent to which dispositional and systemic factors are racialized in schools. Shields's research (2010, 2011) has served as a seminal source providing a conceptual framework.

Shields (2010) proposed a conceptual framework for transformative leadership informed by CRT. This framework highlights the importance of understanding power dynamics, social justice, and the intersectionality of race and other social identities in educational leadership. It emphasized the need for leaders to challenge systemic inequities and advocate for policies and practices promoting educational equity. Drawing from Shields's transformative leadership framework, research questions can be developed to explore the intersection of CRT and transformative leadership theory (LTL) in the context of education change and equity. These

questions can focus on identifying the factors that hinder or facilitate transformative leadership practices, particularly regarding racial equity, and understanding the experiences of leaders who employ transformative approaches in addressing educational inequities.

The work of Warren and Coles (2020) contributed to the theoretical framework by emphasizing the need for organizational change to address systemic barriers in education. Their approach emphasizes the transformative and systemic nature of change required to achieve meaningful improvement. Thus, research questions can explore the themes from listening to the voices of leaders in schools, relating to both dispositional and systemic factors, making the study align with the goal of identifying strategic policy recommendations for enhancing educational transformation. Indeed, the incorporation of a humanizing education framework, CRT, TLT, and the emphasis on organizational change allows for a comprehensive examination of the dispositional and systemic factors affecting school leaders.

Though aligned components of a humanistic approach and organizational change informed this paper, foundational to this research study were CRT (Banks, 1995; Bell, 1992; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016) and TLT (Shields, 2010). By incorporating the conceptual framework of TLT informed by CRT, the research study could effectively explore the complex interplay between educational change, equity, and leadership practices. This approach encompasses concepts and perspectives central to the fields of education, race, and school transformation.

The variables explored in the study include the leadership practices and behaviors of educational leaders, the impact of these practices on addressing educational inequities, and the role of CRT in guiding transformative leadership actions. Other variables may include the organizational culture, policy environment, and resources available to leaders for enacting

transformative change in educational institutions. To select data collection instruments, mixed methods were employed. Quantitative instruments, such as surveys, can measure leadership practices, organizational culture, and perceived levels of equity in the educational setting. Qualitative instruments, such as interviews or focus groups, can provide deeper insights into the lived experiences of leaders and their perspectives on CRT and transformative leadership.

CRT

Critical social theory cultivates human liberation (Corradetti, 2017), denies 'irrational' ideologies (Arato & Gebhardt, 1985) seeking to justify oppression, and seeks to improve our understanding of society. A critical lens to change would thus seek to understand or to make sense of the totality of society, and to revolt against unjust ideology. CRT, a critical social theory, forms the central backbone of the theoretical framework of this paper. CRT seeks to emancipate students of color from the biases and unjust constructs of race and racial conditions (Delgado, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 2016). CRT seeks to make sense of the world by identifying and transforming existing structural aspects of society that maintain inequity (D. G. Solórzano, 1997). Therefore, a CRT-perspective to NC's education problem would "begin with the premise that racism is a normal and endemic component of [its] social fabric" (Milner, 2007, p. 391).

Opportunity Gaps. The term *opportunity gap* is used to redefine and rethink the achievement gap associated with urban education (Irvine, 2010). The achievement gap defined as "disparities in standardized test scores between Black and White, Latina/o and White, and recent immigrant and White students" (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 3) failed to account for the impact of "historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral components" (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 3). Thus, the term *achievement gap* is a deficit-based misnomer because it discounts the impact of

race, racism, and socioeconomic disparities on education. It is deficit-based because it suggests students characterized as having a gap in achievement have a gap or lack in ability commitment to learning (Milner, 2013b; Ryan, 1976). It places the failures of public education on the victim (Ryan, 1976). The term *opportunity gap* thus grew from a desire to "explain unfortunate inequitable opportunities in some communities" (Milner, 2013b, p. 4), to change mindsets around a perceived lack of achievement as measured by standardized testing (Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Irvine, 2010; Milner, 2012), and to incorporate asset-based language to student performance.

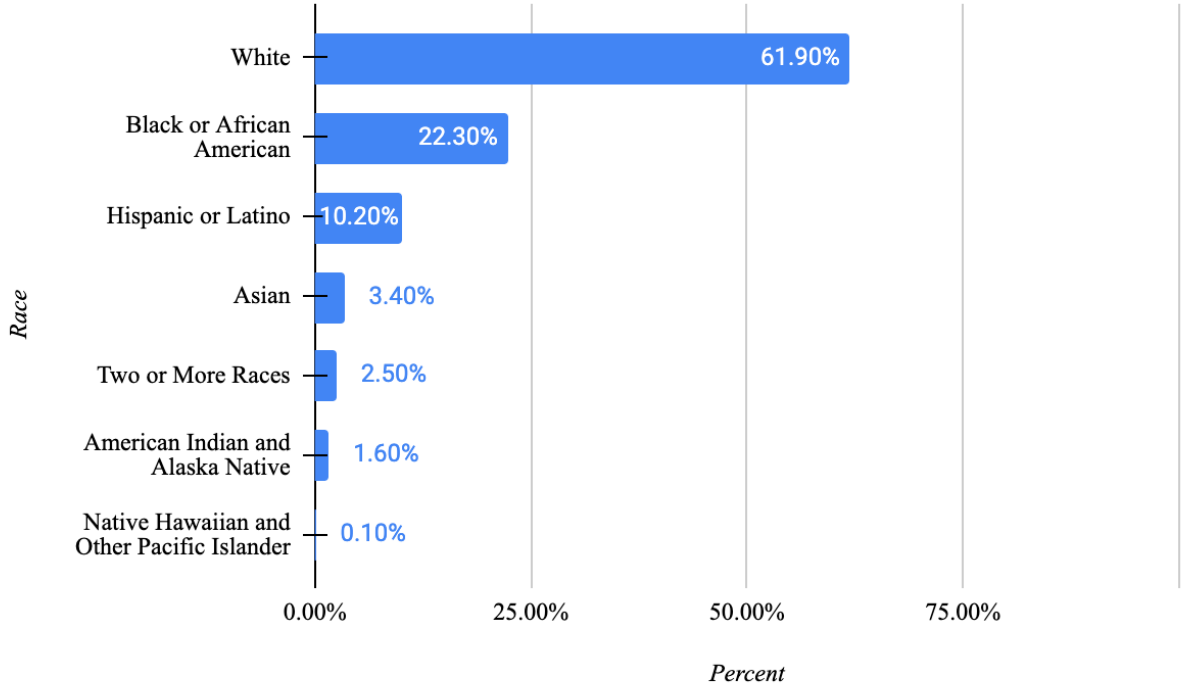
Using a CRT perspective, gaps in opportunities must consider an historical legacy of failing to invest in schools and students most in need of fair resource allocations and the contribution of this legacy to inequities formed around race, class, and gender in schools (Ladson-Billings, 2006). Education for Black people in the South, and by extension, education in NC, has experienced a history of inequities and if systemic oppression, discriminatory barriers, and educational debt are products of a society that maintains inequity, then the problem of opportunity gaps in NC are reinforced by racism and in schools by an absence of equity.

NC's history of inequity has impacted its capacity to be fair, to provide necessary allocation of resources, to eliminate discriminatory barriers, and to provide opportunities for its most vulnerable students to receive a sound and basic education and as a result has created opportunity gaps (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Milner, 2012, 2013a). Being vulnerable in this context pertains to students belonging to subgroups and racial groups typically overrepresented in low-performing schools. Words like vulnerable, marginalized, and excluded have been used interchangeably in this paper. Due to its history of enslavement, exclusion, oppression, and racism and being the largest (22.3%) BIPOC subgroup in the state, the terms vulnerable,

marginalized, and excluded are often expressed in NC in connection to Black persons (Nordstrom & Tillitski, 2021). Figure 4 showcases the racial demographic of persons living in NC according to the 2020 census percentages.

Figure 4

Racial Demographics of Persons Living in NC



Note. Population statistics of NC by race. Adapted from QuickFacts: North Carolina, by U.S. Census, 2022 (https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/NC).

Goodley (2020) commented "debility debates" link capacity with the "language of neoliberal-ableism and humanism" (p. 48). Worth and value are attributes affiliated with the term capacity; attributes some have, and others do not. Alternatively, concepts of capacity are "paramount to keep" (Goodley, 2020, p. 48) in the context of intellectual disability. To disrupt

ableist and deficit language, disability reimagines the term capacity to be "relational and materially enacted with other humans and non-humans" (Goodley, 2020, p. 49). The current study borrowed this understanding of capacity as emerging from "the presence" of people from Goodley's (2002, p. 49) definition.

Discriminatory Barriers. "The opposition to Negro education in the South" not only lasted beyond the abolition of slavery, but ushered in new centuries with bitterness, and "showed itself in ashes, insult, and blood; for the South believed an educated Negro to be a dangerous Negro" (Du Bois, 2018, para. 26). Yet, regardless of the following turbulence, massacres, and discriminatory policies, the Southern negro has long believed the path to freedom is paved with a good education. All persons (primarily non-dominant groups) are all victims of hegemonic ideologies as evidenced by the historical disparities and inequities faced by Black people in the South due to race, racism, and class.

Hall (1986) defined ideology as "concerns the ways in which ideas of different kinds grip the minds of the masses, and thereby become a 'material force'" (p. 26). Education is one of the institutions used to advance cultural ideologies employed to reinforce one's perceived pathologies of one another or to emancipate them from the trappings of stereotypes we have held since colonialism. Indeed, education either conforms or transforms generations of students (Shaull, 2005). For Black communities in the South, education has provided both conformity and transformation. It has been used to maintain leverage over laborers through industrial schooling and to navigate an inequitable educational system for the purpose of dismantling it through the legal system.

Interest Convergence. For a nation so impacted and influenced by race, racism, and class, it is easy to see how racism permeates the U.S. social construct (Milner, 2007). CRT

argues dominant ideologies and issues of race and racism, deeply rooted in NC's history, must be confronted (Bell; 1992, 2018; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Flores, 2018). One tenet of CRT is interest convergence. Milner (2007) explained in interest convergence, power and interest are connected. Those in power may not realize they hold power and privilege simply due to circumstances of birth or may not see the imbalance that exists between themselves and the historically underserved and excluded (i.e., those with less power); they do not object to calling awareness to inequities and addressing them, but not at the expense of their status.

Even during the desegregation of schools legally accepted by the nation, the threat to dominant ideology and power dynamics has resulted in retaliation and resistance. When resistance could not be sustained, it was sought in other ways (Roy & Ford, 2019). Cecelski (2012) wrote, "Black communities repeatedly had to sacrifice their leadership traditions, school cultures, and educational heritage for the other benefits of desegregation" (p. 7). So, in the case of the White southerner (a White person from the South), educational opportunities for Black students that may reduce educational debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006) or opportunity gaps are permissible so long as the reallocation of opportunities does not appear to impede on the privileges and overall status of the dominant race.

The sustained racial and socioeconomic disparities in schools and the community developed from a history of oppression create discriminatory barriers to student learning, thus creating gaps in education and learning. Learning in a supportive environment and community not plagued by detriments to learning as discriminatory barriers, results in higher commitment and performance from students (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018). This is because disparities can influence belongingness and students' self-perceptions. A child raised in a community generationally treated with prejudice and bias by the dominant race, marginalized in

mainstream society, denied a universal sound and basic education, and systemically excluded from opportunities feels a sense of alienation when confronted by this history in and out of classrooms. Ladson-Billings (2006) inquired, “why, then, would we not expect there to be an [achievement/opportunity] gap?” (p. 5).

Indeed, students who do not feel they belong in school carry that burden into the classroom, impacting their engagement with learning and subsequent achievement (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Van Ryzin et al., 2009). Yet, despite inequities due to race, racism, and class, Black communities show a commitment to learning and continue to achieve (i.e., to disrupt rather than perpetuate inequities in education; Green, 2019; Ryan, 1976).

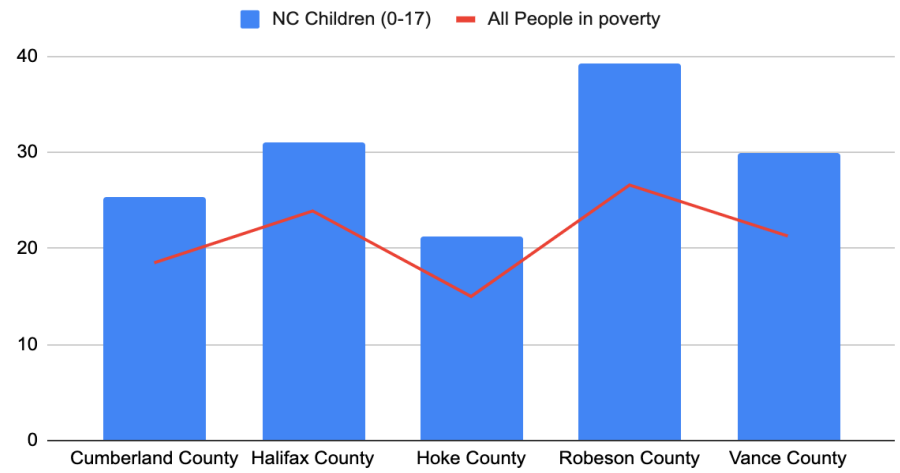
Education Debt. The history of public schooling in the United States has documented one’s accumulation of educational debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006). *Educational debt* is characterized by the various disparities that exist between Black and Brown schools versus White schools in the United States. These disparities include but are not limited to disparities in funding, access, and decision-making power. For southern states like NC, debt has spanned centuries. Indeed, even decades after *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and decades still after the integration of schools in the South, NC schools have continued to experience instances of school segregation and funding disparities. An efficient and equitable allocation of resources to schools serves to increase access to resources and experiences resulting in more positive student learning outcomes (Rolle et al., 2008). *Leandro* attested to the funding disparities experienced by schools as plaintiffs shared; despite taxing its residents higher than average, school districts do not have enough money and resources allocated to them to provide an equal education for their children (McColl, 2020).

Poverty Reports by Budget and Tax Center (Mitchell, 2015) stated NC has "higher rates of poverty, deep poverty, and child poverty than the majority of states" (p. 1) and poverty in the state has varied considerably among rural and urban communities (Harris, 2020; Kennedy & Dreir, 2017; Mitchell, 2015). Using data references from the United States Department of Agricultural, Rual Division, Berner et al. (2016) from the University of NC School of Government also identified a high percentage of NC populations living in poverty (1980–2004) and living in food insecurity (2015).

Figure 5 and Figure 6 showcase data from the Economic Research Service of United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) showing the five districts initiating *Leandro,* for example, children under the age of 18, still range among some of the poorest counties across the state. They range in 2019 between 16.9%–31.5% for the percentage of all people in poverty (2019) and 22.2%–48.1% for children ages 0–17 in poverty. Slight shifts during the COVID-19 global pandemic indicated a range between 15.0%–26.6% for the percentage of all people in poverty in 2020 and 21.3%–39.2% for children ages 0–17 in poverty. In comparison, the overall poverty rate of children under 18 years of age was 16% in 2019 and 17.9% in 2020. After nearly 30 years of *Leandro,* the poverty rate of poverty among children ages 0–17 of the poorest of the five *Leandro* districts, has a higher poverty rate of children under age 18 in NC and an even higher rate in the United States.

Figure 5

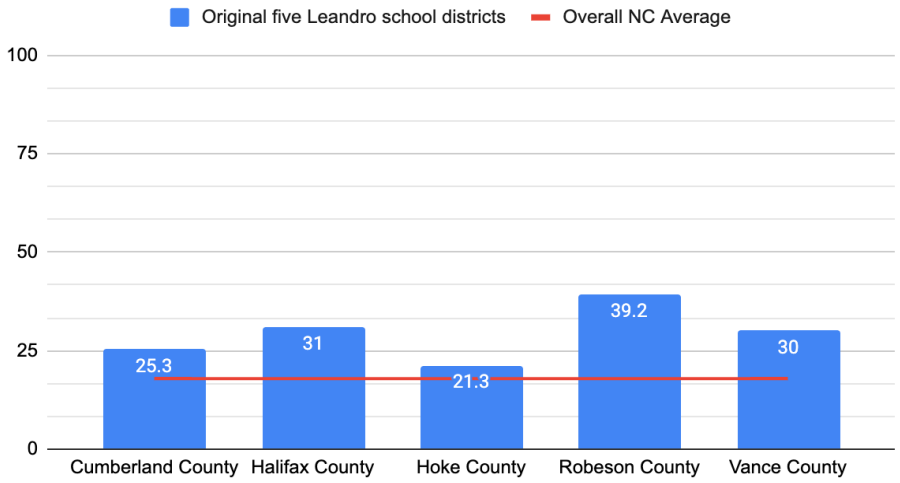
NC Children Ages 0–17 Versus All NC People in Poverty



Note. Counties level economic data in NC. Adapted from the United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, 2020 (https://data.ers.usda.gov/reports.aspx?ID=17826)

Figure 6

Poverty Levels of NC Children Ages 0–17



Note. Counties level economic data in NC. Adapted from the United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service, 2020 (https://data.ers.usda.gov/reports.aspx?ID=17826)

***The Cost of Improving Schools*.** There is a real cost to school improvement. Addressing opportunity gaps touches upon education debt and access to resources outside of funding and when looking at the problem of receptivity including knowledge, ability, and willingness. There is a lack of adequate funding to close gaps or simply to break free from the status quo while in the process of making meaningful school improvement changes puts restraints on progress. For NC, when schools are not provided with the financial foundation from the state needed for school improvement, then funding would need to be found elsewhere. Some funding through federal programs, grants, and local partnerships are available, but only to those who qualify and apply. A school would need district personnel to access these funds, and criteria must be met to receive funding once funding has been accessed. For example, some funding like 21st Century grants are only available to support summer school and can only be applied to pay for tutors.

The WestEd (Oakes et al., 2019) report provided an awareness to the funding crisis that low-performing schools in NC face, which in turn impacts the implementation of initiatives and the purchase of resources to address the needs of all students. Even some short-term scenarios identified by WestEd (Oakes et al., 2019) represented "the support necessary to enable performance gap reduction between lower-performing students and their higher-achieving peers" (p. 43) requires an investment increase per student that amounts to billions across the state per year. Even once the short-term goals achieve gap reduction, there is the issue of maintaining

ongoing reduction, which costs billions over time.

It appears the presence of barriers and absence of support began with the onset of the 2008 recession and has progressively worsened (Oakes et al., 2019; WestEd, 2019). With changes to the economy, public consent, and the political framework of the state so came changes to mindsets and urgency for school improvement and transformation. By 2015, it would appear willingness to address and support school improvement through state-led funding and resources all but disappeared from state leadership. Policies in place to address the transformation of low-performing schools are not working in NC.

The problem of debt and inequitable resource allocation is not new to the state. Since the late 1800s, southern local and state governments outright refused to provide public high school facilities for Black children in which, up to the onset of WWII, Black students were excluded from the United States and specifically southern transformation of public secondary education. The problem of opportunity gaps NC faces, even though the state may have seen some progress in state efforts prior to the recession of 2008, is Black students officially entered the universal public education space—using *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) as the origin point—in roughly the same amount of time West African nations like Burkina-Faso gained their freedom and subsequent independence from colonial French forces.

TLT

Multiple arguments make up TLT. Leadership theories focus on the social characteristics of a transformative leadership (TL; i.e., traits), emphasize leadership approaches to activities or tasks (i.e., process), are driven by results (i.e., outcomes), and are rooted in history (Shields, 2018). Though personality traits based on images of famous persons, both real and fictional, are used to describe leaders, Shields (2018) argued most take a single person perspective. Traits

often center on individual versus collaborative approaches. Additionally, many leadership theories focus on western ideals excluding marginalized groups like Indigenous leaders and Black leaders. When identifying leadership processes, Shields (2018) argued theories neglect to identify the "what" and "how" of components of leadership. And though having desired outcomes helps leaders identify objectives for success, a more robust approach is inclusive of awareness, self-reflection, the recognition of the cultural impact to power (Delpit, 1995), and the inequities "prevent our attainment of a deep democracy" (p. 18).

TLT is framed by critical social theory (Shields, 2010, 2018) and is rooted in the works of seminal authors like Burns (1978) who differentiated between transactional leadership grounded in exchange and transforming leadership focused on real change between leaders and followers and motivated by aspirational outcomes and conviction (Shields, 2018). Other seminal authors of TLT include Leithwood and Jantzi (1990) who outlined TLT. Transformational leadership takes a systems approach, seeking organizational change as commitment beyond individual or group change (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; Shields, 2018).

Different from CRT, various articles and research papers I reviewed for this current study indicated leadership research can use qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods. For example, works like Shields's (2010) study focused on qualitative aspects of research design, but Wilson et al. (2020) provided a mixed methods approach on leadership dispositions. Based on reviewed articles (n = 35), leadership research has used more quantitative methods when focused on performance or effectiveness and using aspects of change theory. Works identified in Table 4 focus on TLT or some form of leadership transformation, or simply touch upon aspects of leadership or organizational change.

Table 4

Literature Reviewed Using TLT as a Framework

Author (year)	Topic	Theoretical framework
Moolenaar et al. (2010)	Examines the influence of transformational leadership on fostering learning conditions in schools	TLT
Shields (2010)	Transformative leadership and its application to educational leadership in diverse contexts	TLT
Shields (2011)	The role of transformative leadership in fostering school-led improvement	TLT
Makaiau et al. (2023)	Social Justice-driven course creation in leadership transformation	Social justice education; transformative Leadership
Fortner et al. (2021)	School leadership dispositions	social and cultural capital; TLT
Palumbo & Styskal (1974)	Receptivity for change	Organizational theory
Smith & Torppa (2010)	Capacity for change and change receptivity	Organizational development
Marzano et al. (2005)	Effective school leadership on student achievement	Models of effective school leadership
Waheed et al. (2018)	School transformation	Grounded theory approach on school equity and transformation
Friend & Caruthers (2012)	Transforming schools (including voice)	Framework inclusive of student voice
Chapman & Muijs (2013)	Impact of leadership practices and school-community relationships on organizational change processes in schools	Educational leadership, organizational change, and school-community relationships
Wilson et al. (2020)	Leadership dispositions	Educational leadership dispositions
Hallinger & Heck (1996)	Principal's role in school effectiveness	Educational leadership and school effectiveness (e.g., contingency theory, instructional leadership, and transformational leadership)
Robinson et al. (2008)	Impact of different leadership types on student outcomes	Educational leadership (e.g., instructional leadership, transformational leadership, and distributed leadership)
Gamoran & An (2016)	School segregation and policy	Educational inequality theory
Christ & Makarani (2009)	Teaching attitudes	Communicative language teaching
Di Fabio & Gori (2016)	Acceptance of change	Cognitive adaptation theory; evolutionary theory; self-determination theory

Author (year)	Topic	Theoretical framework
Harris et al. (2013)	Improving schools in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas	--

In a world pressured by change, volatility, complexity, and uncertainty, educational leaders are called to action through prescriptive reforms and interventions (Caron, 2009; Shields, 2018). Educational leaders are pressured to address concerns around accountability and to close the achievement gap. Instead, transformative leaders are called to close opportunity gaps. They are driven to address inequities in the system and to fight for the success of all students. Shields (2018) argued legislation around accountability has pushed educational leaders to implement technical solutions to complex problems yielding a static position over the years. The nation's educational achievement stasis requires vision, foresight, insight and understanding rather than a focus on exact—and generally prescriptive and technical—interventions (Caron, 2009; Shields, 2018).

The transformative leader is called to close the equity gap. To close the equity gap, the transformative leader begins outside of the system (outside of education) to address "material realities and disparities . . . that impinge on the success of individuals, groups, and the [school] as a whole" (Shields, 2011, p. 14). To do this work, the transformative leader must reconceptualize their way of thinking by using processes of "deconstruction and reconstruction" (Shields, 2011, p. 14). Used in tandem, deconstruction and reconstruction can change and transform education and leadership mindsets (Shields, 2011). Deconstruction (Shields, 2011) does not insinuate the destruction of something as one may conclude. Instead, the deconstruction of traditional educational leadership concepts and frameworks is the breaking down, criticism, or analysis of educational frameworks.

A transformative leader is called to critically analyze and break down the role or purpose of education in students' lives and what it means to be an educational leader. Once this process of reflection and analysis is completed, the transformative leader must then reconstruct or redefine their understanding of equitable education. According to Shields (2020), transformative leadership begins with an inequitable organization and addresses tenets that change one's environment, policies, and structures, continuing through each tenet. The model is designed with arrows to indicate its cyclical nature and to signify "the work is continuous, and never finished" (Shields, 2020, p. 5).

Table 5 provides a breakdown of some of the components of transformative leadership from Shields's 2010 adaptation of the core components of transformative leadership. Components to transformative leadership can be outlined by the eight tenets of TLT. These eight tenets are (a) a mandate to effect deep and equitable change; (b) the need to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks perpetuating inequity and injustice; (c) the need to address the inequitable distributions of power; (d) an emphasis on both private and public (individual and collective) good; © a focus on emancipation, democracy, equity and justice; (f) an emphasis on interdependence interconnectedness, and global awareness; (g) the necessity of balancing critique with promise; and (h) the call to exhibit moral courage (Shields, 2018).

Table 5

Core Components of Transformative Leadership Adapted from Shields (2010)

Component	Description
Starting point	Material realities and disparities outside the organization impinge on the success of individuals, groups, and organization as a whole.
Foundation	Critique and promise
Emphasis	Deep and equitable change in social conditions.
Processes	Deconstructing and reconstructing the social-cultural knowledge

	frameworks generating inequity, acknowledge power and privilege; an inquiry between individual and the community.
Leader	Lives with tension and challenge; requires moral courage, inclusive organizations, participation, advocacy, activism

Deconstruction, Reconstruction, and TLT. Critical to beginning the deconstruction and reconstruction processes for transformative leadership is to acknowledge power and privilege (Burns, 1978; Shields, 2011). A transformative leader must develop a knowledge of all the different components they must change or remove, and the courage to do so. This knowledge can be accessed through introspection, critical reflection, and the analysis of existing systems. For example, Burns (1978) shared transformational leadership calls for an analysis of power and privilege. Shields (2011) identified the processes of introspection, reflection, and analysis as part of developing "new knowledge frameworks."

For the TL, these knowledge frameworks are also created from critiquing existing frameworks perpetuating inequity (i.e., a process of understanding and questioning existing systems and structures such as high stakes testing) that may lead to new and creative approaches to address inequity (Shields, 2011, 2017, 2018). Once obtained, these frameworks are used to deconstruct and reconstruct. The TL deconstructs deficit stereotypes and mindsets used to (a) affirm the culture of poverty (Lewis, 2005), (b) essentialize groups of students (Gorski, 2012), and (c) blame victims of circumstance for not meeting legislated achievement expectations (Ryan, 1976), all of which help further legitimize ideologies that maintain the status quo. That is, the TL must have the dispositions necessary to remove the stereotypes upheld by hegemonies that help maintain certain groups in affluence and power over other persons. The TL transforms mindsets. Though all three strive for change, critical social theories like CRT sets transformative

leadership theory apart from other leadership theories, setting the stage for deep levels of organizational change (Shields, 2018).

Shields (2011) wrote in the process of reconstructing, the TL recreates “images of students and families as knowledgeable, caring, capable of high achievement and of full participation in every decision and activity of the organization” (p. 8). Components of deconstruction and reconstruction processes are captured in knowledge and skill-based tenets of TLT (Fortner et al,, 2021): (b) the need to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks perpetuating inequity and injustice; (d) an emphasis on both private and public (individual and collective) good; (f) an emphasis on interdependence interconnectedness, and global awareness; and (h) the call to exhibit moral courage (Shields, 2018). These tenets to TLT may be captured qualitatively by way of interviews. Remaining tenets, aligned to dispositional attributes of the TL, captured through surveys, set this research up for a mixed methods design. Tenets aligned with disposition include (a) a mandate or dedication to effect deep and equitable change; (c) the need to address the inequitable distributions of power; (d) a focus on emancipation, democracy, equity and justice; and (g) the necessity of balancing critique with promise, as it relates to existing structures, beliefs, practices, and policies (Shields, 2011, 2018).

For this study, I assumed a school leader (a) understands concepts of equity and social justice; (b) recognizes the impact of structural racism in the community and factors that impact opportunity gaps; (c) has a willingness to intentionally advance equity and social justice, seeing it as a must when leading schools for improvement and transformation; and (d) has the opportunity to use these impactful dispositions for the good of students and ultimately the good of humanity.

Synthesis of Frameworks

CRT emerges as a force to stimulate change. CRT provides a framework for understanding how race intersects with power and privilege in society (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). TLT emphasizes the importance of leaders in promoting equity and social justice by challenging existing power structures and creating inclusive environments (Shields, 2011). By using CRT and TLT, educators can address systemic factors that sustain opportunity gaps, discriminatory barriers, and oppressive practices in education.

Framed by humanistic approach to CRT and TLT, a system change model like Lewin's (1947) model may reframe the stages of change to be (a) *un*-thinking spatialized social imaginary, which would be an aspect of change readiness that includes erasing spatialized blackness, terror, exclusion, and all forms of 'racialized spatial containment; (b) unfinishedness in reframing, and redressing spatial order for liberation (Dubin & Frins, 2011; Freire, 2009, 2011; Gorski, 2012; Lipman, 2018); and (c) [community] actualization, which would focus on sustaining liberation (Blood & Heavyhead, 2007; Feigenbaum & Smith, 2020). Figure 7 provides a symbolic representation of these stages using *Mossi* (West African tribe) inspired art. Figure 8 offers a symbolic representation of *Unthinking* as characterized using Adinkra symbols to represent: greatness in leadership (*Adinkrahene Dua*), looking back at the past to look forward (*Sankofa*), democracy (*Wo Nsa Da Mu A*), and a call to action (*Akoben*).

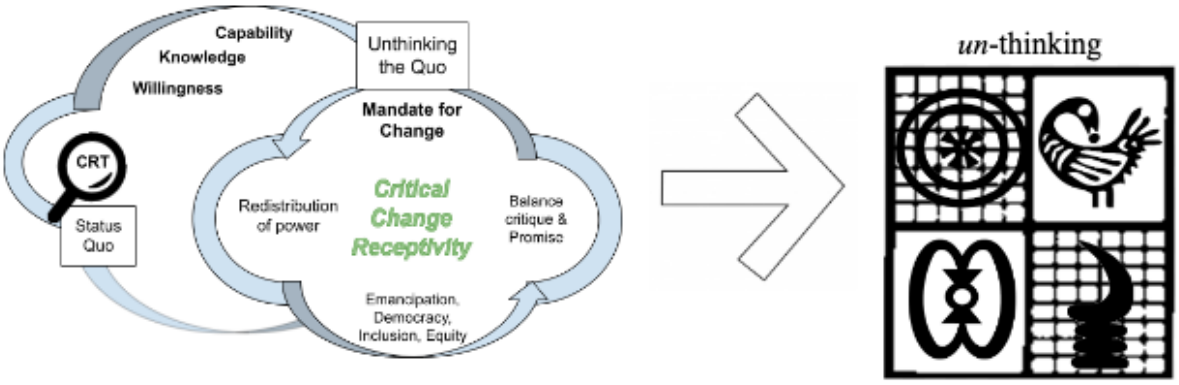
Figure 7

Critical Educational Change Model

Note. Author created.

Figure 8

Critical Change Receptivity: A Case for Readiness



Note. Author created. Modified using components of transformative leadership theory model (Shields, 2011).

Opportunity gaps (Carter & Welner, 2013; Darling-Hammond et al., 2010; Rothstein, 2017; Reardon, 2013), referring to the unequal distribution of resources, opportunities, and outcomes among social groups, are sustained by various factors including social and economic inequalities, institutional practices, and cultural biases (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). D. G. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) argued opportunity gaps are rooted in racialized and class-based social hierarchies in schools and society. Institutional practices, such as standardized testing and tracking, have been identified as contributors to opportunity gaps (López, 2003; Sleeter, 2019). Cultural biases and negative attitudes toward diversity and bilingualism also limit opportunities for certain groups (López, 2003). Economic inequalities further exacerbate the disparities in access to resources and opportunities.

Rothstein (2017) examined how historical and systemic factors contribute to opportunity gaps. Reardon (2013) analyzed patterns of educational inequality and their implications for social mobility. Darling-Hammond et al. (2010) emphasized the importance of equitable funding and resources in schools for addressing opportunity gaps. Carter and Welner (2013) explored the intersection of race, class, and education, examining how structural inequalities contribute to opportunity gaps and suggesting strategies for addressing them. These researchers' works shed light on the causes and consequences of educational inequalities, providing valuable insights into the factors perpetuating disparities in resources, opportunities, and outcomes among social groups.

TLT, as proposed by Shields (2011), emphasizes the importance of promoting social justice and equity through transformative change. CRT, a theoretical framework rooted in legal scholarship and activism, highlights how systemic factors sustain opportunity gaps and oppressive practices (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Together, TLT and CRT provide a

framework for addressing systemic factors that contribute to inequitable practices in the education system (Savage, 2016). TLT (Shields, 2010) and CRT (Banks, 1995, 2015; Bell, 1992, 2018; hooks, 1994; Milner, 2010) provide valuable frameworks. TLT emphasizes the role of leaders in challenging and transforming oppressive structures and promoting equitable practices in education (Shields, 2010). CRT examines the intersection of race, power, and education, highlighting how systemic racism perpetuates opportunity gaps (Banks, 2015; Bell, 1992, 2018; hooks, 1994; Milner, 2010). Scholars have also contributed to the understanding of educational inequities and creating inclusive and equitable systems that provide equal opportunities for all students.

Summary

In this literature review, I highlighted ways in which neoliberalism and cultural hegemony contribute to inequitable practices in the education system. Using CRT and TLT, this review offers strategies for addressing dispositional factors of PK–12 administrators and systemic factors that sustain opportunity gaps and discriminatory practices in the education system. By prioritizing equity and fairness in the education system, educators can work toward providing all students with access to an equitable education.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research methodology for this mixed methods study regarding the systemic and dispositional factors that currently influence the school improvement efforts and progress of schools designated as low-performing (LP) schools in North Carolina (NC). The quantitative phase of the study consists of a survey with seven Likert agreement subscales and one Likert frequency subscale. Each subscale is aligned to aspects of transformative leadership theory (TLT) or of critical race theory (CRT).

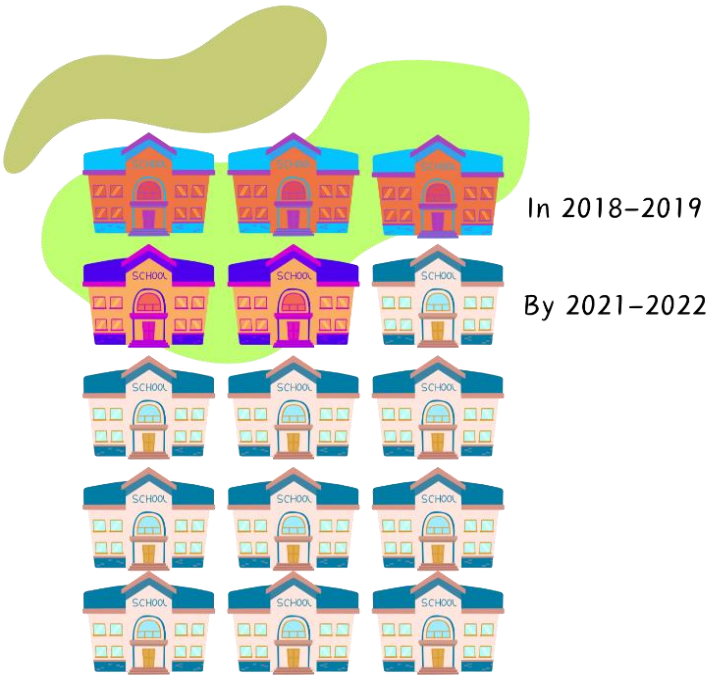
Overview

According to NC's 2018–2019 accountability data (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI], 2023), the state of NC designated 441 of its public non-charter or lab schools as LP. With 2,523 public schools in NC and 488 of them labeled as LP, prior to the start COVID-19 global pandemic, nearly 1 out of every 5 schools in the state was designated as LP—19%. Approximately 300,000 students were impacted by conditions and pressures (in the school, the local education agency, and the state) leading to such a designation. Of the 441 schools, 96% (n = 423) of them were designated as recurring low-perming or nearly all were identified as low-performing in any 2 of the last 3 years. Because the U.S. Department of Education and the NC General Assembly both granted the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) a waiver from administering the statewide assessments required by federal law and from reporting School Performance Grades ("2020–21 Performance of North Carolina Public Schools: Annual Testing Report," 2021) this statistic remained the same until testing restarted during the 2021–2022 school year. Immediately following the release of data after the COVID-19 global pandemic, the number of LP schools more than doubled. One out of 3 schools in NC were

designated LP. Figure 9 provides a visualization of the one to five ratio in 2018–2019 compared with the one to three ratio change by 2021–2022.

Figure 9

LP School Ratio Change From 2018–2019 Data to 2021–2022 Data



Note. Author created.

Guided by the *Leandro v. State of NC* (1997) decision, which upheld the state constitution of students' rights to a "sound basic education," and its ongoing discussion in what the state dubbed, *Leandro II* (2004), which held failures in resource allocation within the State funding system deprive students the opportunity for a 'sound basic education,' the State Board of Education (SBE) identified salient concerns in its mission to "use its constitutional authority to guard and maintain the right of a sound, basic education for every child in North Carolina Public

Schools" (para. 3) by creating three goals[2]. Using case study research methods, this research defined critical receptivity[3] in NC, identified its presence in school leaders of recurring low-performing schools in NC, and examined systematic and dispositional factors influencing these leaders.

Feldhoff and Radisch's Research

Addressing systemic change, reform or improvement of schools is not a new topic in educational research. Though researchers have explored variables such as leadership (e.g., transformational, collaborative, distributed), the climate of the school or professional learning communities (e.g., Feldhoff et al. [2016]'s research) has suggested many school improvement researchers have analyzed changes in student outcomes in the form of achievement data (performance and/or growth) as effects (dependent variable) of a school's capacity to change. This study investigated the dispositions, conditions (with a focus on systemic conditions), or receptivity of NC leadership to making transformative change in schools. As part of the explanatory inquiry, data collection and analysis efforts consisted of an analysis of a survey, documents, and interviews.

In their analysis of international high-impact journals and in the ERIC database, Feldhoff et al. (2016) wrote various longitudinal school improvement, or organizational change efforts, studies have been performed by educational researchers beyond the United States, using a variety of research design methods. Research studies may focus on student accountability data or may depend strictly on quantitative methods. There also exists a variety of qualitative research including various traditions such as case studies, phenomenology, and auto/ethnography, or

[2] Goal I: Eliminate opportunity gaps by 2025; Goal 2: Improve school and district performance by 2025; Goal 3: Increase educator preparedness to meet the needs of every student by 2025 (dpi.nc.gov).
[3] Throughout this paper, Critical Receptivity may also be referred to as or referenced as Receptivity, Change Receptivity, or Critical Change Receptivity.

transformational methodologies such as counter-narratives and testimonios. Take for example, Feldhoff et al.'s study of various research designs. These authors highlighted the integration of evidence such as surveys and single or multi-case analyses as research design best practices.

Methodology of Like Research

In a book on the quality of schools in the United States, Oakes et al. (2006) published research specific to school reform efforts in schools across California. In so doing, the researchers implemented a case study design as a methodology, using focus groups and interviews as evidence of their design selection. Alternatively, P. A. Smith (2019), another education researcher, used phenomenology in his study on Black male school leadership. P. A Smith's (2019) research was focused on "explor[ing] the ways in which the racial identities and lived experiences of Black male K–12 school building-level leaders inform their professional lives, leadership preparation, and leadership development" (p. 5). Although the latter example was more of a focus on leadership capacity versus school improvement, there appears to be a relationship between how one's leadership influences the school and by extent, student progress (in reference to the leader's professional life).

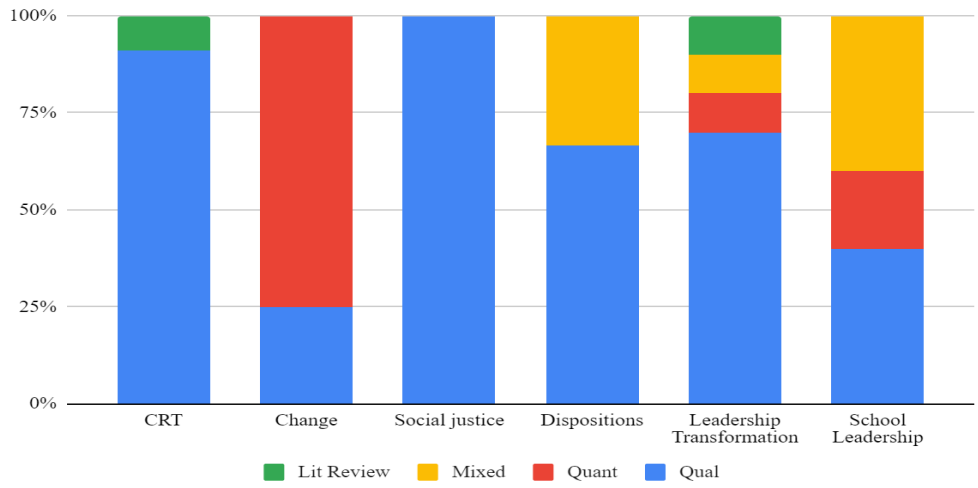
Of the 35 research articles reviewed for Chapter 2, the majority—61% (n = 18)—of those articles on leadership dispositions, leadership transformation, and school leadership explored qualitative research methods; 22% used mixed methods, and 11% used quantitative designs. Of the research articles focused on organizational change reviewed, 75% (n = 4) used quantitative methods for research and 25% (n = 4) used qualitative methods.

A further exploration of organizational or leadership change and transformation reveals research similar to this study apply quantitative, mixed methods, and case study designs (see Figure 10). Considering this dissertation paper focused on leadership disposition and its impact

on the whole school as an organization, and its capacity for improvement through change, it is valid to consider this pattern of methodological designs informing my own design (see Appendix C for a sample of similar educational articles).

Figure 10

Percent Display of Methodologies Used in Study-Related Research Topics



This study's questions were broken down into smaller subsections or components with definitions ascribed to each. Definitions were aligned to CRT and TLT theory tenets and ascribed definitions helping to further identify which data collection tool best informs the question. Table 6 provides components comprising and clarifying the selection of measures and data collection choices to be used for analysis. Components and additional details provided, which align to each of the four research questions, further helped to inform the study's methodology.

Table 6

Research Question Subcategories and Details

Factor	Research question	Components	Additional details
Dispositional	What dispositional factors appear as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in NC? To what extent are the dispositional factors racialized?	1) a *knowledge* of educational equity and systemic factors contributing to educational equity	Knowledge as a category of change receptivity
		2) A *capability*–through various resources and authority (power)	<u>Examples of various resources</u>: a diversity of personnel, flexibility and availability of funding, instructional and professional learning), or authority–to implement initiatives that address inequities in schools, etc.
		3) a *willingness* to pursue social justice aligned dispositional domains (Fortner et al., 2021; Shields, 2019, 2020)	<u>Dispositional domains include</u>: ● Dedicated to equitable change. ● Addressing inequitable distributions of power ● Arguing for democracy through voice Finding balance and affecting change
		4) the *attitudinal presence* of the above-stated domains as interpersonal dispositions	<u>Attitudinal variables affecting receptivity to change</u> (Fortner et al., 2021; Shields, 2019, 2020; Waugh & Punch, 1987): ● Dedication to equitable education ● Openness to addressing inequitable distributions of power. ● Use of voice and democracy (i.e., presence of distributed leadership) for practical change Perceived support and. personal cost to change
Systemic	What systemic factors appeared as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in NC? To what extent are the systemic factors racialized?	1. Persistence of racism as a norm (or racially motivated norms),	Systemic factors that manifest educational inequity in public K–12 schools as identified by researchers (Oakes et al., 2006; and Scheetz & Senge, 2016) and aligned to Critical Race Theory's stance on the salience of racism in the United States (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997)

Factor	Research question	Components	Additional details
		2. The absence of educational supports (both affective and material), and	Criteria for affective supports: Social emotional supports, access to support persons or services (vendors, staff members, volunteers) that provide an opportunity for positive student-adult connection, sense of safety (accessible in TWC data) Criteria for material supports: Student literature (including Culturally relevant materials), technology, highly qualified teachers, demographic representation (teacher to student), enrichment (advanced courses such as Honors or AP classes, clubs/electives, athletics, etc.).
		3. Insufficient resource allocation.	Available funding or spending
Voices of school leaders (narrative inquiry)	What themes emerge from listening to the voices of leaders of LP schools that relate to dispositional and systemic factors?	Voice of school leaders of LP schools collected through (Narrative Inquiry): ● Survey & interview: human experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) Interview: storytelling (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006).	● Survey questions align to dispositional components. ● Interview questions align to research questions
Policy and transformation	From the research findings, what strategic policy recommendations emerge to enhance NC's progress toward educational transformation?	NC Policy: ● Elementary and Secondary Education. ● On low-performing schools ○ Identification ○ School Improvement Planning ● On reform models NC Court Case: *Leandro* (1997) & *Leandro* II (2004)	Statute or policy name: ● Chapter 115C. Elementary and Secondary Education. ● § 115C-105.37. Identification of low-performing schools. ● § 115C-105.37A. Continually low-performing schools; definition; assistance and intervention; reassignment of students. ● § 115C-105.37B. Reform of continually low-performing schools

Case Study as a Research Design

I completed an empirical investigation in the case study design, focusing on a variety of factors (i.e., systemic and dispositional factors as well as critical receptivity for educational change) in K–12 public schools designated as low-performing in NC. I applied Merriam's (1998) definition of a case study, adopted from Miles and Huberman (1994) where a case is a "phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context" (p. 25) and a chosen case to be studied can be "a person, a program, a group, a specific policy, [etc.]" (Merriam, 1998; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Yazan, 2015). Based on this definition, my research consisted of one case study—NC educators consisting of three subgroups: NC state leaders (document analysis), NC educators graduating from NC public schools (interviews), and school leaders (survey and interviews). The NC state leaders' subgroup was analyzed using SBE meeting minutes; the NC graduates were explored using interview responses; school leaders were analyzed using survey and interview responses.

Case study is both a product and a methodology that can apply qualitative or quantitative methods (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Schwandt & Gates, 2017; Yazan, 2015). Specific components to the case study methodology tradition are the researcher's "search for meaning" using an inductive investigative quality and robust data analysis for circumstances outside of their control. Case study design is an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system. A bounded system is one constrained or limited by time, space, and activity or having some physical boundaries (Creswell & Maietta, 2002; Merriam, 1998). For this research, the location was NC. The time was after the COVID-19 global pandemic and within the *Leandro* context—2022–2023. Participants included school leaders, graduates, and indirectly includes state leaders.

Because one can combine qualitative studies like the case study to other methodological traditions (e.g., narrative inquiry, phenomenology), I combined narrative inquiry to this investigation to explore educational culture within schools. Narrative inquiry has interest in personal and social conditions (Bhattacharya, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). According to Connelly and Clandinin (2006), narrative inquiry as a qualitative method is about the human experience; in this study, this included the experience of the K–12 educator and leader. Narrative inquiry focuses on the story and storytelling (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006), which was addressed in the interview of graduates of the NC public school system prior to and during the *Leandro* case timeline, and of school leaders.

Methodology and Data Collected

Wilson and Anagnostopoulos (2021) shared many of the variations existing in education research apply an interpretivist perspective and that some of those interpretive methodological traditions include but are not limited to phenomenology, auto/ethnography, field study, historiography, case study, narrative, symbolic interactionism, action research, life history, and grounded theory. Wilson and Anagnostopoulos (2021) also shared each of the qualitative methods have assumptions about "reality, social life, and knowledge," (p. 653) and as such, each possess its own definitions, parameters, and data collection approaches and types. With such a diversity of methods, it is unsurprising no definitive definition exists for qualitative research.

I opted for a mixed-methods sequential explanatory study beginning with a quantitative phase and followed by a qualitative phase to provide a somewhat holistic insight into dispositional and systemic factors influencing schools in NC. In an effort to mitigate personal biases, I applied reflexivity and used data in a number of ways. I used quantitative data to collect survey responses analyzed for correlation to help tell the story of school improvement efforts of

schools designated as low performing in NC. I applied qualitative designs so the story behind the numbers remained at the forefront of the study. In the qualitative phase, I used participant narratives and lived experiences I collected through interviews. Although my professional experience influences knowledge and perspectives of state-driven school improvement implementation and processes guidance to schools, the data collected, as visualized in Figure 11, drove this research.

Figure 11

Data Collected for the Research

Although 118 survey responses were received, 23 responses met all conditions for inclusion in the study analysis. Other data collected were part of the qualitative phase. These data included 10 audio recordings, five of which were interviews of graduates of NC public schools and the other five of school leaders. Subsequent transcripts from interviews were also used as part of the iterative analysis process.

Additionally, 116 SBE meeting minutes, of which 104 meeting minutes made references to racism, and 12 minutes made references to critical race, were analyzed in alignment to CRT. Other data or instruments used in this research included the 77 documents linked or attached to the 116 SBE meeting minutes, along with various notes, reflections, and memos from the researcher. The data were collected over 6 months from November 2022 to May 2023. Four iterations of data analysis were performed over 6 months, from March 2023 to September 2023.

Research Participants

Participant numbers varied across phases of the study, as seen in Table 7. The quantitative phase was made up of 23 verified respondents to the survey. The qualitative phase consisted of a document analysis and two sets of unique interviews. A total of 116 SBE meeting minutes and 77 documents (or 193 documents) were analyzed as part of the document analysis. With respect to the interviews, I completed 10 total interviews, of which five were interviews of NC public school graduates and five were NC public school administrators.

Table 7

Visualization of Sample Sizes Across Quantitative and Qualitative Phases of the Study

Study phase	Phase product	Participant type	Population description	Verified participants	Sample size analyzed
Quantitative	Survey	School leaders/ administrators	Principals or assistant principals of NC public schools	118	*n* = 23
Qualitative	Interviews	School administrators	Principals or assistant principals of NC public schools	23	*n* = 5
Qualitative	Lived experience interviews	Graduates of NC public schools between 1983–2001	Adults graduated from NC schools	5	*n* = 5
Qualitative	Document analysis	Meetings	*NC State Board of Education Meetings* from January 2018 to July 2023	217	*n* = 116

Survey Participants

This research consisted of two phases, one quantitative and one qualitative. The quantitative phase consisted of a survey. Survey respondents were NC public school leaders. The qualitative phase consisted of a document analysis and two sets of interviews. I interviewed adults that graduated from a NC public school. I also interviewed school leaders, most of which also completed the survey from the quantitative phase.

The criteria for selecting participants for the quantitative phase included being identified as: (a) a member of the school leadership of a K–12 school or school system in NC (including as an administrator currently holding or having held the title of principal or assistant principal of an LP school within 12 months of the interview); (b) an administrator situated within a school currently active (open and in operation); (c) administrator within a school identified as public

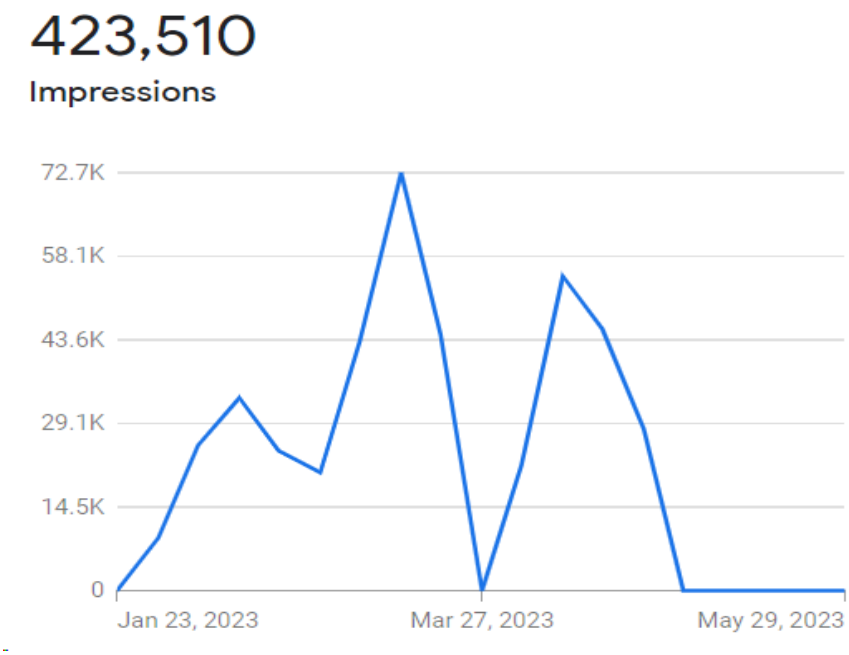
(not private) and nonvirtual; and (d) an administrator not assigned to a school within a charter system or operating as an alternative school.

At the start of this study, 441 schools met the criteria. From those schools, approximately 1100 administrators met these criteria. Because only unique leaders or school administrators were counted as part of the survey sample size, potential participants remained 441. I sought to obtain unique responses from at least 15% of qualifying schools, bringing the potential sample size to 66 participants. Ultimately, 23 survey respondents or participants (5.2%) were analyzed. I was able to secure 118 unique responses (26.8%) to the survey—86 of the 118 consented to the study and 68 completed 100% of the survey, 36 of which identified as working in NC. In the end, 23 unique responses were identified to fit all four of the survey participant criteria outlined and ultimately analyzed within Chapter 4.

As part of the survey responses collection process, I accepted Google ads and LinkedIn advertisement deals. Advertisements were placed and paid for intermittently over 4 months from January 2023 through May 2023 to encourage participation. However, only NC locations were identified in the ads, either as a whole state or focusing on the 50 most populated counties to reduce ad cost. Nearly half a million impressions were made by potential participants living in the more densely populated regions of NC such as the piedmont-triad or north central regions. Of the nearly half a million impressions, there were 4l,650 clicks on the advertisement. 2.5% of these clicks resulted in survey responses. Figure 12 provides visualizations of Google ad impressions made.

Figure 12

Google Ads Impressions of Survey Advertisement



There was a slow response rate throughout the process of collection. Because I saw the types of responses I initially received from the survey yielded respondents did not meet many of the survey participant criteria, I made minor modifications to the study. These modifications were subsequently approved. The use of two sets of interviews was one such modification.

Interview Participants

The criteria for participant selection for the lived experiences interviews were as follows: (a) graduation from the NC public school system and (b) graduation approximately within a decade prior to the *Leandro* case, and up to and including the decision on *Leandro I* or *Leandro II*. The criteria for participant selection for the school leaders' interviews remained the same as those from the qualitative phase. I anticipated school leadership participants would come from survey respondents. Four of the five school administrators interviewed confirmed to have

completed the survey. I received no response from the fifth participant based on a follow up email after the interview.

Modifications to the Research

Because I sought to add a historical component to Chapter 2 and to widen the lens offered by the study's data, I modified the study total and the study. A first modification led to the inclusion of lived experiences for Chapter 2. After an initial informal interview of participants' lived experiences, it became apparent these lived experiences could contribute to the storytelling of disposition and systemic factors influencing NC schools. Thus, I requested a second modification to include lived experience interviews outside of Chapter 2 and to be open to participants outside of those who completed the survey. A third and final modification led to the inclusion of the analysis of quantitative public data and expanded the document analysis to include SBE meeting minutes.

Instruments

I used three instruments in this study. The first was a survey with Likert scale questions aligned to tenets of TLT. The second and third instruments were sets of open-ended questions for interviews. The instrument for adults who graduated from NC Schools between 1983 and 2001 was used during school leader interviews, consisted of three open-ended questions. The instrument used on school administrators leading LP schools in NC consisted of seven open-ended questions.

The Survey

The survey included 40 items categorized into eight subscales composed of Likert scale questions. All but one of the Likert subscales consisted of 4–6 items. The one consisted of two items. This subscale was reduced because I did not receive permissions for other items. Seven of

these subscales were made up of Likert agreement questions and one subscale consists of Likert frequency questions. The survey was composed of a combination of questions from other surveys. Survey questions were compiled from a variety of cultural competency, changemaker, and change acceptance surveys searched online across library databases like ERIC and using the Google search engine.

Ten surveys influenced the final survey published for participants. Direct permission for eight of the surveys was received directly from authors or publishing companies. The other two surveys were copyrighted as available for public use with noncommercial attributions. Original usage, validity, and citations for all surveys contributing to this research's survey are provided in Table 8. All available measures of internal consistency as measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranged between 0.74–0.95 for each survey used, suggesting fair to excellent reliability. All questions or subscales used in this study's survey indicated good to excellent reliability prior to usage. Validity, whether partial, content, internal, or through test-retest, was reported for 50% (n = 10) of the surveys.

Table 8

Reliability of Surveys Used from Other Research

Title	Original usage	Original reliability
Organizational Readiness for Implementing Change (ORIC)	Hamilton et al. shared "The Organizational Readiness for Implementing Change (ORIC) measure originated with Weiner's theory, which is based on the staff's ability to initiate change, put forth greater effort, be persistent, and cooperate with one another to implement the change" (2011, p. 1).	The instrument is theory based. Has excellent reliability overall with a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of .96. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for change efficacy was 0.94, and for change commitment 0.90.
School Heads' Leadership Practices (SLPQ)	The study "assessed the relationship between the school heads' leadership practices, administrative disposition, and readiness of the public schools among school principals in the City Schools Divisions in Laguna for	Excellent reliability with a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of .954

Title	Original usage	Original reliability
	the school year 2020–2021" and results were obtained using the descriptive-correlational research design (Villar et al., 2021).	
Cultural Competence Self Assessment Questionnaire (CCSAQ)	Created by the Portland Research and Training Center. The instrument "helps child- and family-serving agencies assess their cross-cultural strengths and weaknesses in order to design specific training activities or interventions" (Mason, 1995).	Internal consistency reported with a majority of subscales yielding coefficients alpha of 0.80 or higher. Content validity also reported.
Cultural and Linguistic Competence Family Organization Assessment (CLCFOA)	According to its manual, the CLCFOA is intended "to support family organizations to 1. plan for and incorporate culturally and linguistically competent policies, structures, and practices in all aspects of their work. 2. enhance the quality of services and supports they deliver within culturally diverse and underserved communities; and 3. promote cultural and linguistic competence as an essential approach in the elimination of disparities and the promotion of equity" (Goode, 2010).	None reported. It is suggested the instrument be used in a process to assess organizational readiness.
Workplace Readiness Questionnaire	The questionnaire was developed to assess small workplaces' readiness to adopt and implement evidence-based wellness programs using Weiner's theory of readiness for change (Hannon et al., 2017).	Acceptable internal reliability within each subscale reported (coefficient alpha range, .75–.88). The "change efficacy" subscale (not used in this study) did not predict change-related effort.
Educators Scale of Student Diversity (ESSD)	Created as part of a study to "uncover a rich theoretical basis of cultural competency and awareness in education" and used to measure the cultural competency and awareness of educators (Patel, 2017).	Cronbach's alpha was .88 for the scale, suggesting reliability. Content reliability established. Convergent validity using correlation analysis was moderate positive.
Organizational Readiness to Change Assessment (ORCA)	The instrument is theory based (Promoting Action on Research Implementation in Health Services, or PARIHS) and was developed as a measurement instrument to operationalize the constructs defined in the framework. ORCA is aligned to the core elements of the PARIHS framework.	Not been validated beyond test-retest reliability. Kappa scores are favorable ranging from 0.39 to 0.80. Cronbach's alpha for scale reliability for the overall scales were 0.74, 0.85 and 0.95 for the evidence, context and facilitation scales.
Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist	The instrument was designed to be a self-assessment tool to explore individual cultural competence.	None reported.

Title	Original usage	Original reliability
MGH DoM Anti-RaCism (ARC) Assessment	The instrument was created as part of a research on health to assess whether attitudes about the impact of racism on health or society are associated with intervening around racism.	Partially validated. Items assessing the impact of racism included questions from previously validated scales and also new items not previously validated.
Privilege and Oppression Inventory	Given the need to train and periodically assess counselors' degree of Multicultural Counseling Competency (MCC).	Cronbach's alpha coefficient for internal consistency reliability of the 39-item POI (total score) was high (.95). Exception of 1 item. Validation procedures completed.

Prior to publishing, each survey was reviewed for reliability and questions were selected in alignment to the research questions. All questions were reviewed and subsequently tested among seven academic or educational experts prior to publishing. Experts tested questions for understanding and for alignment to CRT and TLT. Each expert completed at least two iterations of the final survey prior to the start of data collection.

Survey Alignment. The survey consisted of eight subscales with Likert scale questions and some demographic information. Two additional optional and open-ended questions were asked to provide respondents an opportunity to add clarification on their leadership style and actions. Table 9 shows the eight subscales, the research question and the subcategory or component they align to. Table 10 provides a sample of the survey questions as aligned to TLT tenets.

Table 9

Research and Survey Questions Alignment

Research question alignment	Subscale	Research question component	Research question subcomponent	Theory alignment
RQ1 What dispositional factors appear as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in N.C.? To what extent are the dispositional factors racialized? RQ3 What themes emerge from listening to the voices of leaders of LP schools relating to dispositional and systemic factors?	SQ19 As an educational leader	Willingness	One's desire to change in the pursuit for social justice	TLT & CRT
	SQ21 To what extent do you agree	Attitudinal presence Dedicated to equitable change	Aligned to the "mandate for equity" domain of TLT	TLT
	SQ22 To what extent do you agree	Attitudinal presence Addressing inequitable distributions of power	Aligned to the "redistribution of power" domain of TLT	TLT
	SQ23 To what extent do you agree	Attitudinal presence Arguing for democracy through voice	Aligned to the "emancipation, democracy, inclusion, equity" domain of TLT	TLT
	SQ24 To what extent do you agree	Attitudinal presence Finding balance and affecting change	Aligned to the "balance critique & promise" domain of TLT	TLT
		Capability (use of moral resources)		
RQ2 What systemic factors appeared as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in N.C.? To what extent are the systemic factors	SQ20 In general in my school, when there is agreement that change needs to happen	Educational supports (both affective and material)	• Affective opportunity for positive studen	CRT

Research question alignment	Subscale	Research question component	Research question subcomponent	Theory alignment
racialized?			t-adult connection, safety ● Material student literature or curriculum	
RQ3 What themes emerge from listening to the voices of leaders of LP schools that relate to dispositional and systemic factors?				
		Resource allocation	Access to funds	
	SQ25 To what extent do you agree	Persistence of racism as a norm	Endemicity of racism within to the fabric of U.S. society	CRT
	SQ26 How often have you completed the following behaviors in the last 12 months?	● The presence and persistence of racism ● Attitudinal presence Finding balance and affecting change (through action)	Frequency of action and systemicity of factors.	TLT & CRT

Table 10

Sample of Survey Questions and Alignment to TLT

TLT tenet	Tenet components (Shields, 2018)	Leadership reflections and dialogue (Shields, 2020)	Survey questions using Likert scales
A. Dedicated to equitable change	TLs identify new approaches to address inequity. Apply constant questioning to lead to creative new approaches. Leaders maintain an unwavering commitment	Reflects on their own beliefs, values, and assumptions. Examines data from school. Understands the community context-social, political, and	I am motivated to consider other perspectives (Heaton, 2016). I am motivated to implement equitable change at my school (Hamilton et al., 2011; Shea, et al., 2014; B. J.

TLT tenet	Tenet components (Shields, 2018)	Leadership reflections and dialogue (Shields, 2020)	Survey questions using Likert scales
	to addressing inequity	cultural-within which they work	Weiner, 2009)
B. Addressing inequitable distributions of power	Examining how we use power for good or ill (Shields, 2020) Acknowledging the hegemony of power and privilege (Shields, 2011) Reaching new awareness of inequity opens the space for more equitable approaches. Leaders recognize their own power and the potential for rule-bending	Reflects on ways to address inequitable distributions of power. May ask themselves: (a) What kind of power do I have? (b) When and how do I use it? (c)When and why do I feel powerless? Considers goals of policies such as disciplinary policy to determine if their purpose is to punish, cast shame or exclude.	I intervene in an appropriate manner when I observe other staff or clients within my program or agency engaging in behaviors that show cultural insensitivity, racial biases, and prejudice (Goode et al., 2010) The school has enough financial resources to support initiatives for equitable and continuous improvement (Hannon et al., 2017).
C. Arguing for democracy through voice	Conditions under which students can learn freely and fairly to develop their own concepts, opinions, and self-identity are developed. Restoring the voices of teachers, parents and students Knowledge of equity is used to overcome deficit thinking & takes responsibility for change	Shares power, hope and the fruits of society (Shields, 2020) Reflects on the need for emancipation. Ensures inclusive, democratic and socially just classroom practices. Provides conditions under which students can learn freely and fairly to develop . . . self-identity	Staff have access to culturally related materials (Mason, 1995). Our school uses interpreters to work with linguistically diverse students (Mason, 1995).
D. Finding balance and affecting change	Understanding the need to challenge current practices. Recognizing that transformation involves pushback and moral courage	Reflects on which groups or individuals have been marginalized. Asks key equity questions such as: (a) Who is excluded and who is included?	Staff, students, and families are allowed to innovate and promote continuous improvement for the school. I am aware of my own biases toward students (Patel, 2017).

The survey was disseminated to school leaders through educator groups, over email pushout through Qualtrics for persons identifying as a principal as stated by EDDIE, and across social media platforms.

TLT Tenets Aligning to the Survey. Shields (2017) shared, beginning with "justice and democracy," transformative leadership "offers a way of thinking that underpins, but does not prescribe, decisions about fiscal and resource allocations, hiring and personnel management, teaching and learning in addition to issues of school and district climate, culture, and vision" (p. 8). TLT tenets survey questions were aligned to Tenets 1, 3, 5, and 7 and were based on research by Fortner et al. (2021) where they shared these four tenets are "closely related to the set of dispositions applicable to school administrators" but the four tenets not selected "aligned more with the skills and knowledge" used to effectuate change (pp. 9–10), some of which can be assessed through the qualitative phase of the research.

I identified what appeared to be key components of Shields's (2015, 2016) transformative leadership in a table and attempted to align the questions assembled to four of the tenets, which were highlighted by Fortner et al. (2021) in research on asset-based leadership dispositions for advancing equity and academic achievement. For example, Shields (2020) shared questioning, dialogue, free-writing, reflection, deliberative and distributive processes, and relationship-building are central to the successful implementation of TLT, suggesting a school leader applying these as part of their efforts to improve the school or as part of their leadership style, may be more receptive to certain dispositional facilitators rather than barriers of educational equity.

Intersecting Dispositions. Though each of the four dispositional tenets may exist independent from one another in a school-based leader, I hypothesized their independent

existence in a leader did not negate them from having additional TL knowledge, skills, or attributes but it did negate them from being a transformative leader. Leaders may have transformative characteristics vital to them becoming TLs, but without all four I hypothesized the likelihood of being a TL diminished. A similar assumption was completed regarding TLT defined by Shields (2018), who stated:

> Leadership that begins by recognizing that the inequities that prevent our attainment of a deep democracy not only exist in every community but that these material inequities powerfully and detrimentally affect the possibility of equitable educational outcomes for all students. (p. 18)

This suggests a dedication to effect deep and equitable change requires one also address inequitable distributions of power (i.e., Tenets 1 and 3) suggesting one is unlikely to exist without the other. Similarly, a focus on emancipation and justice, requires a dedication to equity (i.e., Tenets 1 and 5), which transversely suggests the need to address inequitable distributions of power likely exists with a leader's focus on emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice (i.e., Tenets 3 and 5). Based on the relationship among tenets, the interconnectedness of each tenet suggested a close connection between a focus on emancipation and justice, with the necessity of balancing critique with promise (i.e., Tenets 5 and 7). Without balance, it may be difficult for a leader to justly and equitably construct systems. This may also suggest the need to address inequitable distributions of power on the journey toward equity requires balance as a TL will exist in an environment with uncommon pushback as TLs challenge current practices as well as power structures (i.e., Tenets 3 and 7).

Interviews

Interview questions consisted of open-ended questions with space to ask probing questions based on principal responses. Notes for the interview process included participant responses and reflections or memos from the researcher on perceived participant body language and tone. As part of introductions for each interview, participants were asked to identify basic demographic information such as race/ethnicity, gender, and career experience.

The School Leader Interview. Formal interview questions outside of these reflections explored the school leader's knowledge of factors impacting their school, elicitation interview methods were employed. Following a review of documents, photos, or artifacts the participant provided before or during the interview process, open-ended questions seeking participant viewpoint and perspective were asked by the researcher. The interview process for this research elicited deeper information regarding the school leader's dispositions, skills, and knowledge of the history and factors impacting their school and school community and the work being done to remove potential barriers to student progress or uphold facilitators to positive change using semistructured interviews.

Semistructured interviews are flexible and allow for probing questions to be asked during the interview process as the researcher seeks to deepen their understanding of a participant's perspectives or (Drever, 1995; Patton, 2002; Pratt & Yezierski, 2018). Elicitation can enhance the interview process by permitting participants to respond to visual components such as artifacts or documents (Pratt & Yezierski, 2018). For this study, artifacts or documents were solicited by the researcher from the participant prior to the interview. Artifacts or documents were shared prior to or during the interview itself, related to the leader's school improvement work or any initiatives the leader feels critical to the success of the school, student body and school

community. Pratt and Yezierski (2018) shared various tasks during the interview process such as card sorting, demonstrations, using multiple representations, or even using think-aloud protocols to further support the elicitation process.

The planned semistructured interview questions are provided in this section. They are listed in order of flow with whole numbers as primary questions and all subsequent subsection questions as probing or follow up to the primary question for when the participant does not respond to the component identified in probing. School administrator interview questions included:

1. Tell me about yourself, your background and why you chose this career.
    1.1. How long have you been at this school? In what capacity?
2. Tell me a bit about your school.
    2.1. How would you characterize your school?
    2.2. What is at the forefront when you think about your school site and why?
3. Tell me about the [artifacts, documents, or photos] you've shared with me about your school. Why did you pick these [artifacts, documents, or photos]?
    3.1. What do these [artifacts/documents/photos] say about your school community?
        3.1.1. [probe for perception of students, parents, teachers, etc.]
        3.1.2. [probe for school improvement, transformation, funding, initiatives, professional development, educational supports, hiring practices, etc.]
4. How has the school changed under your leadership?
    4.1. How will the school change under your leadership? (if new leader)

4.2. Can you describe to me where you see this school and its community in the future?

4.2.1. How do you visualize it? Feel free to sketch a picture, matrix, or map.

5. [Interviewee will be asked to share their SIP] Can you take a moment to walk me through this SIP?

5.1. Who is or has been part of the school improvement process at your school?

5.2. Who is typically involved in decision-making at your school?

5.2.1. Is there an example that comes to mind that you can talk to me about?

5.3. What do you know about the *Leandro* case? (if not brought up)

5.3.1. How has it influenced your decision-making at the school?

5.3.1.1. How has it impacted or influenced yours [or your district's] approach to meet student needs? (if knowledgeable)

6. What is your vision/plan for this school?

6.1. Who or what will help you fulfill this (vision/plan)?

6.1.1. What are your short term and long goals/vision for the school and its community? (if new leader)

6.2. How do you see yourself engaging staff, students, parents and other stakeholders to fulfill this vision/plan?

6.3. What kind of response do you think you'll receive from the community? (for the vision/plan)

6.3.1. How do you plan to address them (if responses include pushback)

7. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me about this school, its students, teachers, and community members?

Lived Experiences Interviews. Designs in education research apply an interpretivist perspective (Holloway & Wheeler, 2002; Wilson & Anagnostopoulos, 2021). Such an approach to social reality, often found in qualitative research, addresses how humans make sense (Weick, 1995) of the social world, and use lived experience (Turner & Bruner, 1986)—descriptive first accounts—to discover "theoretical *truth* and *reality*" (Swanson & Holton, 2005, p. 358). An exploration of the first-person accounts of education in NC along with current event accounts could help make sense (Weick, 1995) of, and further contextualize the problem of racial educational inequity and opportunity gaps in NC.

NC public school graduates were invited to provide qualitative data adding to this research in the form of a conversational semistructured interview. Participation time was up to 60 minutes. Educational inequity and opportunity gaps in NC were contextualized through these lived experiences interviews. To accommodate this contextualization, the study was modified to include interviews from adults who graduated from NC public schools. Lived experience interviews offered stories and detailed examples of remembrances from public school graduates of attending school in NC and their remembrances of interactions with various subgroups of students and staff. Because participants from these interviews were unique and distinct from those conducted on school-based leaders, some questions from the school-based administrator interviews were modified and used. Lived experiences interviews included:

1. What education levels (i.e., elementary, middle, secondary, post-secondary, college, graduate school, etc.) did you experience in North Carolina?
2. What has been your educational journey or experiences in NC (and please provide examples)?

a. What were your teachers like? How were they treated? How did they treat one another?
b. What were the students like? How were they treated? How did they treat one another?
    i. Do you recall encounters with [other] students of color?
    ii. Do you recall seeing or befriending students from other cultures or countries?
    iii. Did anyone speak a different language and if so, how were they perceived by other students or teachers?
    iv. Did you attend school with students with disabilities and if so, tell me more about that experience. What did you see? How did you feel?
c. What notable experiences do you recall and how did they make you feel?

3. [If interviewee is currently working in education] What prompted you to pursue a career in education?
    a. What has been your experience as an educator and how has it been similar or different from your experience as a student?

Procedures of Data Collection

Data for this research were collected through quantitative and qualitative means in the form of a survey, document analysis, and interviews. The phases of this mixed methods sequential explanatory design are provided in Table 11.

Table 11

Phases of the Mixed-Methods Sequential Explanatory Design and Procedures

Phases	Study component	Phase product	Procedure
Quantitative data collection	Transformative leadership dispositions and the pervasiveness of racism.	Survey	Qualtrics for creation and dissemination of survey
Quantitative data analysis			SPSS software used for descriptive and correlation analysis
Connecting quantitative and qualitative phases	Factors influencing school processes and improvement.	Document Analysis	Analysis of SBE meeting minutes.
Qualitative data collection	Retelling cases of lived Experiences and cases of leadership narratives.	Interview	Initiated as purposive and ended as snowball sampling. Two sets of semistructured interviews.
Qualitative data analysis			NVivo and Google sheets used for inductive coding and analysis.
Integration of quantitative and qualitative results	Integration of information	N/A	Interpretation and explanation of the quantitative and qualitative results

Leadership dispositional and systemic factors influencing schools in NC were collected using a Qualtrics survey. Google ads and LinkedIn advertisements helped to procure survey responses. All data collected for the quantitative phase of the study was captured in survey responses. Using Likert agreement and frequency subscales, I categorized items falling within key tenets of TLT to determine prominent dispositions and systemic factors across the state. The final count of usable and valid, with respect to fulfilling all participant criteria, quantitative responses to the survey was 23 responses.

The qualitative phase consisted of a document analysis and two sets of unique interviews. SBE meeting minutes were collected online on the state's website where they are posted and

made publicly available. I collected SBE and some local meeting minutes, meeting actions, and an assortment of various state initiatives and documents to take a comprehensive approach to analysis. I analyzed a total of 116 SBE meeting minutes and 77 documents (or 193 documents) as part of the document analysis.

Nuanced data within each category were further collected in the document analysis and within interviews. I performed 10 total interviews, of which five were interviews of NC public school graduates and five were NC public school administrators. I conducted all interviews using their respective instruments. Probing questions were related to those already listed within their respective instruments. I collected researcher notes within the instrument, audio files of each interview, and transcripts of each interview as part of interview responses. Each participant had their own copy of the appropriate interview instrument and had access to review researcher notes. All school leadership interview participants and most lived experiences participants welcomed potential follow up questions after the interview where clarifications were necessary. Two school administrator interview participants required follow up, which was provided in writing in the form of additional notes or journaling from the participant.

Survey results, document analysis results, and interview results triangulated findings. More data were collected than was ultimately analyzed. Although I sought holistic insight, some of the additional data I collected proved to be an oversaturation of data, including:

- data on state level, district level, and school level demographic representation;
- changes in principals in LP schools in comparison to non-LP schools;
- accountability results over the previous 5 years;
- photographs and observations of a LP school buildings compared to the state of buildings of non-LP schools;

- the analysis of policy surrounding school improvement;
- a document analysis of school improvement plans; and
- a historical data review of state level needs assessments for LP schools.

Although the simple review or exploration of such data may have helped the researcher process connections between findings, the information was ultimately deemed unnecessary and would not contribute additional findings for this state of the research.

Procedures of Data Analysis

The Survey

Responses in Qualtrics were initially reviewed in the program but due to invalidated responses—those not fitting the participant criteria—these results were downloaded and uploaded to Google sheets. Raw data were cleaned, and initial calculations were completed using pivot tables. More specifically, identifiers were created and location information outside of the state's region was removed. The data were sorted by consent. Surveys that did not provide consent were separated. Consented survey responses were sorted by survey progress. Survey responses indicating consent and 100% progress were saved. I removed any responses indicating the participant did not currently work in NC. I examined the remaining responses to determine if they fit the survey criteria. All who did were saved and analyzed using Google sheets and using SPSS. White spaces were trimmed, and pivot tables were created. Google sheet pivot tables included a calculation of counts, agreement percentages, and mean of responses. Google sheets were used based on researcher comfort and as a method of double-checking results analyzed using SPSS. After additional practice with the software, SPSS was used for all final analysis and conclusions.

Because question items within individual subscales were aligned to subcomponents of TLT or CRT, it made sense to look for relationships in each subscale and subsequently across subscales. A series of descriptive analysis to review central measures of tendency and skewness were completed on all 40 survey items using SPSS. In addition to completing descriptive analysis for each survey Likert subscale, I created custom tables in SPSS for agreement percentages for the seven subscales using Likert agreements custom tables were also used for the Likert frequency subscale. Additionally, I completed correlation analysis for all items within each of the eight subscales. Results with correlations significant at the 0.01 level and at the 0.05 (2-tailed) level were prioritized. Subscales were created from components of the theoretical frameworks TLT and CRT and as such, results aligned to components of TLT and CRT. Correlation analysis was completed for all subscales, followed by an exploratory analysis of all item combinations under each subscale with correlation coefficients greater than 0.5. I then created visualizations of subscale items with correlation coefficients greater than 0.5. Findings were summarized and overall subscale correlations and summarized were clustered for an overall survey analysis across the four tenets of TLT and to respond to research questions (see Table 10).

The Document Analysis

The analysis of documents began with a deductive coding process, and initially included a review of SBE meeting minutes, school improvement plans of the schools from school leaders interviewed, and SBE actions between 2016 and 2018. NVivo was used to group document types as a case. Analysis began with SBE meeting minutes. Codes were created and defined based on tenets from TLT as displayed in Table 12. References were created for existing codes, but this process was adjusted due to the massiveness of text being analyzed. Frequency queries of five

words, and their family likeness, or bigger were created and saved. Queries were created using keywords from TLT tenets such as power, equity, emancipation, critique, change, and more. Queries yielding an excessive count of words connected to titles, proper nouns, and the like were modified to place the titles and proper nouns as part of a ‘do not include’ list.

Table 12

Document Analysis Codes Initially Created and Defined Based on Transformative Learning Theory Tenets

Name	Description
Accommodative	This disposition is specific to one’s willingness to find solutions or ways to address school needs. It significantly helps predict leadership management practices and post-pandemic school operational readiness (Villar et al., 2021).
Attitudinal presence	This suggests having four TLT tenets as interpersonal dispositions. Attitudinal variables include a dedication to equitable education; openness to addressing inequitable distributions of power; the use of voice and democracy (i.e., presence of distributed leadership) for practical change; and perceived support and. personal cost to change.
Balancing critique with promise	A tenet of TLT and attribute of a TL where one understands the need to challenge current practices and recognizes that transformation involves pushback and moral courage.
Building capacity (teacher or students)	According to edglossary, teacher capacity refers to the perceived abilities, skills, and expertise of teachers in a school or district, or their ability to progress. Building capacity is a reflective process to improve capabilities of more persons, more often.
Capability	This addresses one’s capability to complete actions using various resources and/or having authority (power). Examples of various resources may include: a diversity of personnel, flexibility and availability of funding, instructional and professional learning), or authority–to implement initiatives that address inequities in schools, etc.
Cultural competence	Cultural competence refers to cross-cultural awareness and influences (Chao, Okazaki, & Hong, 2011). It also refers to communication effectiveness across cultures and the ability to adapt to other cultural environments (e.g., Hansen, Pepitone-Arreola-Rockwell, & Greene, 2000). Cultural competence is always expanding and is centered on experience, knowledge, skills, awareness, and attitudes between or involving more than one culture (Deardorff, 2006).
Deficit mentality	Deficit mindset is a focus on problems rather than potential and use of words like “can’t” while mentality is a tendency to assume that when students from disadvantaged or marginalized circumstances struggle in school, they do so

Name	Description
	because their circumstances hinder their academic progress. It a circular argument (applying circular reasoning) for the achievement gap.
Educational supports (affective & material)	This includes both affective and material support. The first are social emotional supports, access to support persons or services (vendors, staff members, volunteers) that provide an opportunity for positive student-adult connection, sense of safety (accessible in TWC data). The latter includes student literature (+Culturally relevant materials), technology, highly qualified teachers, demographic representation (teacher to student), enrichment (advanced courses such as Honors or AP classes, clubs, etc.
Emancipation, democracy, equity and justice	A tenet of TLT. A TL would design conditions under which students can learn freely and fairly to develop their own concepts, opinions, and self-identity are developed. A TL would prioritize restoring the voices of teachers, parents and students (providing a space where they are seen, heard and empowered). Knowledge of equity is used to overcome deficit thinking and leaders take responsibility for change.
Inclusivity	This disposition is specific to the practice and policy of access (e.g., to opportunities, resources, etc.) for excluded, marginalized, or disabled, among others. It significantly helps predict leadership management practices and post-pandemic school operational readiness (Villar et al., 2021).
Inequitable distributions of power	A tenet of TLT and a disposition toward examining how we use power for good or ill (Shields, 2020). A TL with this attribute would "acknowledge the pervasiveness and hegemony of power and privilege" (Shields, 2011) and be reaching new awareness of inequity. This opens the space for more equitable approaches. Additionally, TLs recognize their own power and the potential for rule-bending. Thus, one's power is used explicitly and intentionally to transform.
Knowledge (ways to do)	This is a category of change receptivity and refers to a knowledge of educational equity and systemic factors contributing to educational equity.
Leadership	Impactful attributes that focus on attitudes, norms, institutions, and behaviors that structure daily life
Management	Refers to the presence or absence of management skills of a school leader. According to various business management programs or degree pathways, these often include planning, organization, communication, conflict resolution, distributive leadership, etc.
Mandate for Equity	One of the 8 tenets of TLT. In this tenet, Transformative Leaders (TLs) identify new approaches to address inequity. TLs apply constant questioning to lead to creative new approaches and maintain an unwavering commitment to addressing inequity.
Normalized racism	Refers to the existing complexities of racism and its persistence as a norm. Systemic factors that manifest educational inequity in public k-12 schools as identified by researchers (Noguera, 2006; Oakes & Rogers, 2003; and Scheetz & Senge, 2016) and aligned to Critical Race Theory's stance on the salience of racism in the United States (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997).

Name	Description
Racism	A systemic factor and barrier to equity and organizational transformation. Refers to prejudice, discrimination or antagonism directed at historically marginalized or disenfranchised persons.
Resilience in stress	Resilience is about one's adaptability to difficult situations. Stress management is one's ability to manage and cope with stress. The two combined are a management quality that impacts school culture and student learning.
Resource allocation (use of money)	Refers to the dissemination and collaborative planning of available funding or spending.
Resources (people, money, power)	These include a diversity of personnel, flexibility and availability of funding, instructional and professional learning), or authority
Willingness	This refers to one's readiness or preparedness. In this study, this is specific to one's willingness to pursue social justice aligned dispositional domains (Fortner, Lalas and Strikwerda, 2021; Shields, 2019, 2020) and may include the four dispositional domains of TLT (Dedicated to equitable change; Addressing inequitable distributions of power; Arguing for democracy through voice; and Finding balance and affecting change)

Due to a prolonged loss of NVivo licensing, analysis using the software was suspended and I adopted a pseudo-inductive coding approach, and codes were, for the most part, derived from the data. I specified pseudo-inductive because although the data drove the analysis, the analysis was initiated using the key word *racism*. Upon further exploration of documents, other codes emerged from the data, which was how *critical race* was also analyzed. I did not create an actual codebook prior to analysis. The timeline of documents reviewed was reduced from a 2016–2023 timeline to a 2018–2023 timeline. All other documents but SBE meeting minutes were analyzed and aligned to CRT rather than TLT. A word search was completed on all 217 meeting minutes from 2018–2023.

An additional word search was completed directly from the state's *Simbli* eboard storing SBE minutes and plans. *Simbli* is a cloud-based board management software with filter and search capabilities. Words such as race, racism, critical race, discrimination, oppression, and indoctrination were searched. CRT was initially searched but due to it yielding more unrelated

than related results, the search was modified for ‘critical race.’ Also, the search for ‘race’ was abandoned for similar reasons; it yielded more results having to do with the identification of race in data than in a discussion of or about race. Indoctrination was mentioned once and as such was not analyzed. Other words like discrimination and oppression were often found in combination with racism so the search was narrowed to the keywords racism and critical race. Racism was uttered or mentioned a total of 458 times across 104 SBE meeting minutes and 77 accompanying documents within those minutes. Critical races were mentioned or uttered 16 times across 12 SBE meeting minutes.

I organized and completed an in-depth analysis of each document using Google sheets. Data were organized and categorized by month, year, meeting type, meeting title, item title (if document enclosed), item type, count of mentions or utterances of the keyword, level (i.e., content, education, or agency level the reference pertains to), details about the mention or utterance, total pages of the minutes and separately of each enclosed document, exact mention or reference within the minutes or enclosed documents, reason for the mention or utterance (was it an action or discussion), recommendations from the SBE (if any), and final outcomes from these recommendations. I created charts based on findings and connected them to events to contextualize the analysis.

The Interviews

Inductive coding was completed on interview results. Prior to each interview, a copy of the interview questions was created in Google Drive and titled with the pseudonym of the participant. During the interview, notes were scribed within the questions document. Audio for interviews was recorded using zoom with closed captions. The notes and closed captions were saved and matched to audio transcripts using Rev.com to ensure the narrative analyzed was

accurate. Due to the prolonged lack of access to NVivo, analysis of narratives was completed manually. No codes were identified prior to analysis but the analysis began with seeking patterns potentially qualifying as dispositional or systemic factors.

Interviews were reviewed individually and matched to reflections and dialogue from TL leaders outlined by Shields (2018). Text matching to elements from tenet components (Shields, 2020) or dialogue and reflections (Shields, 2018) was highlighted and grouped for thematic coding. For this process, whole quotations were set aside and linked to the appropriate participant pseudonym. Patterns from quotations were identified and structured as dispositional, system, or a combination. After individual interview reviews were completed, quotations across interviews were grouped to identify emerging themes. A summary analysis combining all interviews was completed and connections to other components of the study (quantitative results and other qualitative results) were combined to form an overall study finding.

Validity and Reliability

I did not collect emails or take note of personnel names during the interview process though some participants volunteered information and gave verbal permission to use their real name. I opted to use pseudonyms for all interview participants, including school names. County, district, or region names of NC were not altered. I requested demographic information from interviewees, including but not limited to school grade span, race or ethnicity, and years of professional experience. Seven out of eight survey subscales indicated acceptable reliability using Cronbach’s alpha. The survey, document analysis, and interviews combined helped to triangulate findings. Excluding the sample size of survey participants, all sample sizes are statistically significant or appropriate for the type of analysis.

Assumptions

Ladson-Billings (1998) stated, “From a critical race theory perspective, race and racism are so ingrained in the fabric of U.S. society that they become normalized” (p. 390). Part of the dangers of exploring race and culture in research is doing so without knowledge of the self and positionality. It is important to contextualize literature and findings in relation to race (when the research lends itself to this exploration) and culture so as not to mistakenly make color-blind (Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Pollack, 2009, 2013; Zirkel & Pollack, 2016) assumptions or assertions.

To address personal bias, I applied reflexivity by way of questioning “what hidden assumptions are constraining (distorting) the way I make sense of the other?” (Taylor & Medina, 2011, p. 5). I approached the research with an anticipation of embedding regular and intentional self-reflection to address my own assumptions and biases. The desire to use a mixed methods approach was in part to help mitigate potential biases by collecting an abundance of evidence. Multiple categories to the qualitative design phase provided the opportunity for the data to be triangulated alongside the quantitative data.

Limitations of the Research Methodology

Limitations outside of my control occurred in this research. At the time of the research, I worked for the state’s department of public instruction and had provided support to many LP schools. My connectivity to state reform efforts and LP schools was a limitation to some colleagues. In my role with the state, I supported or evaluated some of the very school leaders and administrators I sought to interview.

Another factor outside of my control was time. I was bound by a window start time controlled by IRB approval and a window close time of my CITI certification and dissertation defense deadline. The research was also bound by the availability of participants at the time of

the IRB application. In addition to connectivity and time, limitations included SBE policy and NCDPI organizational changes, which were modified multiple times prior to and during the research. This was in part due to or influenced by the COVID-19 global pandemic. Policy changes influenced LP schools, state reform efforts, and improvement practices across districts.

Another limitation was my quantitative sample size. Additionally, reaching 118 respondents took several months and yet only 23 responses could be verified and used for analysis. It is possible a larger sample size would have yielded different conclusions. I am unsure what might happen with a larger sample size except to push out the survey once more with the support of local researchers. Even with the smaller sample size, correlations explored and analyzed had high significance and greater than 0.5 correlation coefficients.

Delimitations of the Research Methodology

Boundaries I imposed on this research in efforts to narrow it included school types, school designations, school location, participant criteria, and participant engagement. I sought target schools as LP public K–12 schools in NC and participants were leaders of these schools. Survey participants who voluntarily consented to be interviewed in addition to taking the survey also limited the research. Consent was difficult to obtain, as were valid participants. The process required money for advertisements, which was scarce. Some respondents communicated they would only consent to the research if monetarily compensated.

Additionally, the self-imposed need for multiple tools for data collection to yield ample datasets for analysis set the stage for time limits and constraints for a thorough analysis. The mixed methods design to the research included the creation and dissemination of a survey for data collection; document analysis and interviews required ample time commitment both for the researcher and participants, as well as time-bound responses from participants. Additionally

affecting time was the wait time for permissions to survey questions used. Finally, the research study was delimited to participants who worked as a school leader within a NC school.

Summary

In this study, I used a mixed methods case study design to address the barriers to educational equity, specifically to closing opportunity gaps. This study was completed by surveying participants, analyzing documents, interviewing a sample of school leadership, and interviewing graduates of NC high schools. These steps were taken to identify the dispositional and systemic factors that appeared as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in NC. The process provided clarity as to the extent to which dispositional or systemic factors are racialized and indirectly offers information on the extent of change receptivity, (i.e., dispositions, knowledge, capability, and willingness) in leaders as they seek to meet student needs and to effectuate change.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

> From my experience, change is never a comfortable proposition. It's uncomfortable before it's comfortable again.
>
> −David Chapelle, *My Next Guest Needs No Introduction with David Letterman*

Purpose of Research Study

Leandro (1997) was a North Carolina (NC) landmark court case highlighting the need for educational equity in NC. The case mandated every child in the state has a constitutional right to a sound basic education. However, NC has continued to struggle with eliminating opportunity gaps and providing equal educational opportunities for all students. This study aimed to identify the leadership dispositions and systemic factors hindering educational equity in NC.

Without educational equity, the educational system fails to empower (or liberate) all individuals. Despite the state's efforts to close opportunity gaps, there are still significant disparities in educational outcomes in NC based on race and socioeconomic status. The gap between educationally disadvantaged students (EDS), as they are labeled in the state's accountability model, and their non-EDS peers has continued to persist, and students of color have been disproportionately affected.

The stubborn existence of opportunity gaps suggests gaps are simply the observable and superficial factors of more systemic phenomena. In outlining important measures used to monitor a goal to eliminate opportunity gaps, the NC State Board of Education identified nine measures. These measures include (a) exclusionary discipline practices; (b) school climate measures; (c) pre-K enrollment; (d) kindergarten readiness; (e) high school drop-out rate; (f) ACT composite scores; (g) chronic absenteeism; (h) course remediations; (i) access to educators

of color; and (j) the EDS population. Some of these measures, such as access to educators of color, do not include metrics and as such offer limited data. Data collected for this study, including survey results, interview responses or narratives, document analysis, and varied measures describing aspects of the educational status in NC, suggested though all seven SBE measures describe contributing factors to existing opportunity gaps, they are not the root cause of these gaps.

Research Methodology and Interview Questions

This research employed a mixed-methods sequential explanatory study to identify factors contributing to the receptivity of educational leaders in NC, to change or transform schools by eliminating opportunity gaps. Using quantitative results from a survey protocol aligned to four of eight tenets within transformational leadership theory (TLT), survey questions asked school leaders to self-report personal leadership attitudes, characteristics, and actions using Likert questions (see Table 13; Shields, 2010, 2020). Survey questions were collected or modified from a multitude of existing and publicly accessible or author-provided permissions on changemaker, cultural competence and change acceptance surveys.

Table 13

Composition of the Survey

Question	Subscale domain	Overarching subscale prompt	Likert type	Items
Q19	Willingness	As an educational leader [. . . I]	Agreement	4
Q20	Educational supports (including funding)	In general, in my school, when there is agreement that change needs to happen . . .	Agreement	4
Q21	Dedication to equitable change	To what extent do you agree . . .	Agreement	6
Q22	Distributions of power	To what extent do you agree . . .	Agreement	6
Q23	Democratization of schooling	To what extent do you agree . . .	Agreement	6
Q24	Capability (finding balance)	To what extent do you agree . . .	Agreement	2
Q25	Pervasiveness of racism	To what extent do you agree . . .	Agreement	6
Q26	Racialized school transformation	How often have you completed the following behaviors in the last 12 months?	Frequency	5

Research Questions

The research questions addressing change acceptance and receptivity toward educational equity on which this study focused included:

1. What dispositional factors appear as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in N.C.? To what extent are the dispositional factors racialized?
2. What systemic factors appear as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in N.C.? To what extent are the systemic factors racialized?
3. What themes emerge from listening to the voices of leaders of LP schools that relate to dispositional and systemic factors?

4. From the research findings, what strategic policy recommendations emerge to enhance N.C.'s progress toward educational transformation?

Research Question Components. Each research question was broken down into smaller subsections or components with definitions ascribed to each. Definitions were aligned to critical race theory (CRT) and TLT theory tenets and ascribed definitions helped to further identify which data collection tool best informs the question. Table 14 provides an overview of CRT and TLT theory factors (i.e., dispositional or systemic) impacting education.

Table 14

Factors That Align Across CRT, TLT, and the Humanizing Framework

Research question	Critical race theory	Transformative leadership theory	Humanizing framework
What factors (i.e., dispositional, or systemic) appear as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in NC? To what extent are these factors racialized?	A cultivation of human liberation	A dedication to equitable change	Harbor a deep desire for equity (e.g., eliminate racism, violence, etc.)
	A denial of 'irrational' ideologies that justify oppression	A drive to address inequitable distributions of power	Promotion of liberation, dignity, and human potential
	Improving understanding of society	Arguing for democracy through voice	Creating caring environment, positive relationships, and fostering openness
	Transforming aspects of society that maintain inequity	Finding balance and affecting change	Reset schooling to upend dehumanizing policies and practices in education

Research Question 1. Table 15 offers components and the subsequent data collection methodology for the first research question. Components focused on dispositional factors appearing as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in NC and the extent to which these dispositional factors racialized can be broken down into the following subcategories

dispositional factors, knowledge, capability, willingness, and attitude. Dispositional factors are specific to the dispositional domains outlined TLT (Shields, 2010). These include (a) being dedicated to equitable change, (b) addressing inequitable distributions of power, (c) arguing for democracy through voice, and (d) finding balance and affecting change. Knowledge in this context concerns a knowledge of educational equity and systemic factors contributing to educational equity. Capability centers around a capability approach to education valuing human freedoms (Garrett, 2008; Nussbaum, 2011), moral resources, and human potential (Garrett, 2008; Hedge & MacKenzie, 2012; Nussbaum, 2011).

Table 15

Components and Data Tools for Research Question 1

Research question	Components	Description	Data tool
What dispositional factors appear as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in N.C.? To what extent are the dispositional factors racialized?	Dispositional factors	Dispositions that align to CRT and TLT values	Survey; Interviews (school leaders)
	Knowledge	Knowledge also influences one's receptivity to change.	Interviews (school leaders)
	Capability	Solidarity is an example of a moral resource.	Survey; Interviews (school leaders)
	Willingness	One's desire to change in the pursuit for social justice	Survey; Interviews (school leaders)
	Attitudinal presence	Refers to TLT attitudes that affect one's receptivity to change.	Survey

A person using moral resources may use power or influence to equitably distribute various other resources, e.g., personnel diversity or allotment, funding to address income inequality, capacity-building opportunities, and other equity-driven initiatives. Capability in this

context is the belief in a person's ability to "do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being" (Sen, 1993, p. 30). Willingness is specific to the pursuit of social justice aligned with the four dispositional domains (Fortner et al., 2021; Shields, 2019, 2020). Attitudinal presence is related to one's receptivity to change as aligned to the four dispositional domains (i.e., dedication to equitable education, openness to addressing inequitable distributions of power, use of voice and democracy, and finding balance and affecting change). Interviews and survey results were used to address components of this research question.

Research Question 2. Table 16 offers components and the subsequent data collection methodology for the second research question. Components to the question on systemic factors appearing as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in NC and the extent to which these dispositional factors racialized can be broken down into the following subcategories systemic factors, normalized racism, educational supports, and resource allocation. Systemic factors, or persistent patterns materializing themselves in educational achievement are typically impacted by factors such as "parent education, access to preschool, childhood nutrition and health, individual and neighborhood poverty and segregation" (O'Day & Smith, 2016). These factors are strong predictors of individual economic success (e.g., wages and public values).

Table 16

Components and Data Tools for Research Question 2

Research question	Components	Description	Data tool
What systemic factors appeared as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in N.C.? To what extent are the systemic factors racialized?	Systemic factors	Persistent patterns in educational achievement and strong predictors of individual economic success (e.g., wage and public values).	Document analysis (SBE minutes); Interviews (school leaders)
	Persistence of racism as a norm	Aligned to CRT's stance on the salience of racism in the US.	Document analysis (SBE minutes); Interviews (graduates of NC public schools)
	Educational supports (both affective and material)	Affective support may include social emotional support, access to support persons or services that provide an opportunity for positive student-adult connection, safety, etc.	Survey; Interviews; Public Data
		Material supports may include student literature, technology, access to highly qualified teachers, demographic representation (teacher to student), enrichment (e.g., Honors/AP classes, clubs/electives, athletics, etc.).	Public Data
	Resource allocation	Funding or spending	Public Data

The normalization of racism is found in the systemic factors manifesting educational inequity in public K–12 schools as identified by researchers (Scheetz & Senge, 2016) and aligned to critical race theory's stance on the salience of racism in the United States (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997). Educational supports can span affective or material support. Examples of affective support include social emotional support, access to support persons or

services (vendors, staff members, volunteers) that provide an opportunity for positive student-adult connection, and sense of safety. Examples of material support may include student literature (e.g., culturally relevant materials), access to educational tools and technology, highly qualified teachers, demographic representation (teacher to student), and content variety or enrichment opportunities (e.g., advanced courses such as Honors or AP classes, clubs/electives, athletic). Resource allocation is specific to funding efforts directly supporting students.

Though not all descriptors of each component were analyzed, the second research question is supported by a document analysis of SBE minutes, components of the survey, an analysis of results from the lived experiences of graduates from NC public schools, and a brief review of public data such as the Teacher Working Conditions Survey (TWCS) and the state's statistical profile. This study focuses on data from survey responses, document analysis (SBE meeting minutes), and interviews (of school leaders and graduates of NC schools). Some public data are used to further contextualize findings. A deeper data dive using state statistical profiles, school accountability data, or TWC will be used in future research.

Research Questions 3 and 4. Table 17 offers components and the subsequent data collection methodology for the third and fourth research questions. Voices of school leaders and lived experience of graduates from NC public schools are shared through a survey and interviews. Narrative inquiry tells us of the human experience and the use of interviews provide a story of experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) and help reveal emerging themes contextualized by document analysis and historical reviews. Interview questions along with document analysis align to research questions and offer insight into systemic factors. A review of existing policy surrounding *Leandro*, and of statutes surrounding public education in NC. Chapter 115C of state statutes provides information surrounding elementary and secondary

requirements in NC. More specifically, § 115C-105.37 details the Identification of low-performing schools, § 115C-105.37(a) outlines Continually low-performing schools; their definition; assistance and intervention; and the reassignment of students; and § 115C-105.37(b) that details reform efforts of continually low-performing schools.

Table 17

Components and Data Tools for Research Questions 3 and 4

Research question	Description	Data tool
What themes emerge from listening to the voices of leaders of LP schools that relate to dispositional and systemic factors?	Narrative Inquiry tells us of the human experience and the use of interviews provide a story of experience (Connelly & Clandinin, 2012). Survey questions and interviews help to reveal dispositional components. Interview questions along with document analysis align to research questions.	Survey Interview (school leaders and graduates of NC public schools)
From the research findings, what strategic policy recommendations emerge to enhance N.C.'s progress toward educational transformation?	N.C. Statutes or Policy & N.C. Court Case, *Leandro* (1997) & *Leandro* II (2004)	Survey; Document analysis; Interviews

Chapter Synopsis

Quantitative and qualitative results of data collected in response to the research questions are shared in this chapter. Narratives were collected outlining the lived experiences of graduates of the NC public school system and others providing a glimpse into the school leadership experience in K–12 public schools in NC. Additionally, topics within state board meeting minutes were quantified, and educational policies related to *Leandro* were tracked. Overall

patterns and results from these data points suggest ingrained societal practices or factors control the story of the NC education complex.

Though data points of dropout rates, reading readiness, achievement, and more sound the alarm to existing educational problems, disenfranchisement is the product of a more stubborn issue in education. O'Day and Smith (2016) claimed the existing disenfranchisement of people and contributing devitalization of the overall educational system's liberatory abilities are the products of disparities within the larger society. Though persistent patterns in educational achievement are impacted by factors like "parent education, access to preschool, childhood nutrition and health, individual and neighborhood poverty and segregation" (O'Day & Smith, 2016, p. 298), with these factors acting as strong predictors of individual economic success (e.g., wage and public values), unequal opportunities and adult norms and attitudes cannot be discounted.

Monitoring NC Progress

NC SBE uses the *Strategic Dashboard Monitoring Tool*, an interactive platform used to help track and evaluate how well schools are doing in relation to achieving the priorities and objectives of state goals. The dashboard is interactive and permits users to examine information at the school, district, and state level on students, instructors, or administrators. Its inception was prompted by the 2020 adoption of a remedial comprehensive plan from *Leandro*, which was released to the public on the NCDPI site in 2022. Table 18 provides a breakdown of data displayed in the dashboard by June 2023. Each data type is aligned to state goals and objectives but not all objectives have data types and data points. The limited or lack of data points for many goal objectives or components suggest the SBE uses incomplete and possibly ineffective monitoring processes. For example, Table 18 shows by June 2023, kindergarten readiness,

chronic absenteeism, dropout rates, and ACT scores informed the state's progress on eliminating opportunity gaps. Metrics providing teacher to student demographic comparisons for example are missing, though such a component is an objective of the goal. Limited monitoring suggests limited awareness impacting decision-making and fidelity of implementation.

Table 18

Individual Measures for NC State Board of Education Goals

Goal	**Individual Measure** (Goal Objective Component)	Data Point	Time Range
Eliminate Opportunity Gaps by 2025	• Exclusionary Discipline Practices (1.1)	1. In-school, short-term, long-term suspensions	2017-2022
	• School Climate Measures (1.2)	--	--
	• 4-Year-Old Children in Pre-K (1.3) • Kindergarten Readiness (1.3)	1. % 4-year-old children enrolled in Pre-K 2. Kindergarten Student Readiness	2017-2022 2022
	• High School Drop-Out Rate (1.4) • ACT Composite Scores (1.4.1) • Chronic Absenteeism (1.4.3)	1. High School Dropout Rate 2. Average Composite Score on ACT 3. Early Postsecondary Opportunities 4. Chronic Absenteeism	2017-2022 2017-2022 2017-2022 2017-2022
	• Students Taking Remedial Courses (1.5)	--	--
	• Educators of Color (1.6)	--	--
	• Charter School with Economically Disadvantaged Students (1.7)	1. % of Economically Disadvantaged Students in Charter Schools	2017-2022
Improve School and District Performance by 2025	• Allocated Financial, Business, & Technology resources (2.1)	--	--
	• Grades 3-8 Math and ELA Scores Meeting Federal Yearly Measures of Interim Progress (2.2)	1. %-age of Grades 3-8 Math Scores 2. %-age of Grades 3-8 English Language Arts	2017-2022 2017-2022
	• Students Proficient in Math (2.3)	1. % Students Proficient in Math	2016-2022
	• Students Proficient in Reading by the End of 3rd Grade (2.4)	1. % Students Proficient in Reading	2016-2022
	• High School Reading Scores Meeting Federal Yearly Measures of Interim Progress (2.5)	1. %-age of High School Reading Scores	2017-2022
	• Students Proficient in Science (2.6)	1. % Students Proficient in Science	2016-2022
	• Equitable Access to Economically Disadvantaged Students (2.7)	--	--
	• Schools Exciting or Meeting Academic, Operational, & Financial Goals (2.8)	--	--
	• Qualified and Well-Prepared Principals (2.9)	--	--
Increase Educator Preparedness to Meet the Needs of All Students by 2025	• Teacher Mobility, Teacher Effectiveness & Beginning and Provisional Teachers	1. Teacher Mobility Rate 2. Teacher Effectiveness 3. Percent Beginning and Provisional Teachers	2017-2022 2018-2022 2018-2022
	• Culturally Relevant, Equity-Focused Resources (3.1)	--	--
	• Mentors for Beginning Educators (3.2)	--	--
	• Relationship between Education Preparation Programs, Districts, and Schools (3.3)	--	--
	• Opportunities for Educator Engagement In & Out of Schools (3.4)	--	--

This study offered an alternate and somewhat comprehensive progress monitoring of the public-school experience in NC. The context was provided through an exploration of that state of school leaders and their dispositions, the experiences of graduates from NC public schools, a document analysis of SBE meetings, a brief review of public state data, and an agreement analysis of a survey for school leaders.

CHAPTER 4.1

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

There were seven subscales to the quantitative phase of this study. Each subscale corresponded to a question on the survey and was composed of either four or eight items. This was true for all but Q24, which was made up of two items. All subscales aligned to criteria within CRT or TLT. Using correlation analysis, subscales provided insight into the dispositions of NC school leaders and racial disparities contributing to systemic factors impacting education across the state.

Originating Reliability Results of the Survey

The quantitative phase was composed of a survey. The survey was a combination of questions compiled from a variety of cultural competency, changemaker, and change acceptance surveys searched online across library databases like ERIC and using the search engine, Google. Ten surveys influenced the final survey published to participants, as displayed in Appendix D. Direct permission for eight of the surveys was received directly from authors or publishing companies. The other two surveys were copyrighted as available for public use with noncommercial attributions. Original usage, validity, and citations for all surveys contributing to this research's survey are provided in Table 20 (see Appendix D for permission status). All available measures of internal consistency as measured by Cronbach's alpha coefficient, range between 0.74–0.95 for each survey used, suggesting fair to excellent reliability. All questions or subscales used in this study's survey indicated good to excellent reliability prior to usage. Validity–whether partial, content, internal, or through test-retest–was reported for 50% (n = 10) of the surveys.

Table 20

Original Use and Reliability of Surveys Used from Other Research

Title	Original usage	Original reliability
Organizational Readiness for Implementing Change (ORIC)	Hamilton et al. (2011) shared "The Organizational Readiness for Implementing Change (ORIC) measure originated with Weiner's theory, which is based on the staff's ability to initiate change, put forth greater effort, be persistent, and cooperate with one another to implement the change" (p. 1).	The instrument is theory based. Has excellent reliability overall with a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of .96. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for change efficacy was 0.94, and for change commitment 0.90.
School Heads' Leadership Practices (SLPQ)	The study "assessed the relationship between the school heads' leadership practices, administrative disposition, and readiness of the public schools among school principals in the City Schools Divisions in Laguna for the school year 2020–2021" and results were obtained using the descriptive-correlational research design (Villar et al., 2021).	Excellent reliability with a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of .954
Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Assessment Questionnaire (CCSAQ)	Created by the Portland Research and Training Center. The instrument "helps child- and family-serving agencies assess their cross-cultural strengths and weaknesses in order to design specific training activities or interventions" (Mason, 1995).	Internal consistency reported with a majority of subscales yielding coefficients alpha of 0.80 or higher. Content validity also reported.
Cultural and Linguistic Competence Family Organization Assessment (CLCFOA)	According to its manual, the CLCFOA is intended "to support family organizations to 1. plan for and incorporate culturally and linguistically competent policies, structures, and practices in all aspects of their work; 2. enhance the quality of services and supports they deliver within culturally diverse and underserved communities; and 3. promote cultural and linguistic competence as an essential approach in the elimination of disparities and the promotion of equity" (Goode, 2010).	None reported. It is suggested the instrument be used in a process to assess organizational readiness.
Workplace Readiness Questionnaire	The questionnaire was developed to assess small workplaces' readiness to adopt and implement evidence-based wellness programs using Weiner's theory of readiness for change (Hannon et al., 2017).	Acceptable internal reliability within each subscale reported (coefficient alpha range, .75–.88). The "change efficacy" subscale (not used in this study) did not predict change-related effort.
Educators Scale of Student	Created as part of a study to "uncover a rich theoretical basis of cultural competency and awareness in education" and used to measure	Cronbach's alpha was .88 for the scale, suggesting reliability. Content reliability established. Convergent validity using

Diversity (ESSD)	the cultural competency and awareness of educators (Patel, 2017).	correlation analysis was moderate positive.
Organizational Readiness to Change Assessment (ORCA)	The instrument is theory based (Promoting Action on Research Implementation in Health Services, or PARIHS) and was developed as a measurement instrument to operationalize the constructs defined in the framework. ORCA is aligned to the core elements and subelements of the PARIHS framework.	Not been validated beyond test-retest reliability. Kappa scores are favorable ranging from 0.39 to 0.80. Cronbach's alpha for scale reliability for the overall scales were 0.74, 0.85 and 0.95 for the evidence, context, and facilitation scales.
Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist	The instrument was designed to be a self-assessment tool to explore individual cultural competence.	None reported.
MGH DoM Anti-RaCism (ARC) Assessment	The instrument was created as part of a research on health to assess whether attitudes about the impact of racism on health or society are associated with intervening around racism.	Partially validated. Items assessing the impact of racism included questions from previously validated scales and new items not previously validated.
Privilege and Oppression Inventory	Given the need to train and periodically assess counselors' degree of Multicultural Counseling Competency (MCC).	Cronbach's alpha coefficient for internal consistency reliability of the 39-item POI (total score) was high (.95). Exception of 1 item. Validation procedures completed.

Prior to publishing, each survey was reviewed for reliability and questions were selected in alignment to the research questions. All questions were reviewed and subsequently tested among seven academic or educational experts prior to publishing. Experts tested questions for understanding and for alignment to critical race theory (CRT) and transformational learning theory (TLT). Each expert completed at least two iterations of the final survey prior to the start of data collection.

Likert agreement and frequency of use questions were used in the survey. A display of the basic composition of the survey, i.e., subscale domain, prompt, Likert, and items, is provided in Table 20. The final survey was composed of a consent page, definitions, demographics, and general school information, followed by eight subscales using Likert-type questions, preceded by

two open-ended questions. Four subscales were aligned to key components of Shields's (2018, 2020) transformative leadership, specific to the four tenets highlighted by Fortner et al. (2021) in their research on asset-based leadership dispositions for advancing equity and academic achievement.

Survey Participant Demographics

Most survey respondents—72.88% (*n* = 118)—consented to complete the study. Of the total consenting participants, 68 completed the survey with 100% progress and 36 of consenting respondents indicated they worked in a NC school. After a thorough review of responses and because some survey scales were not designed to force responses, the number of viable applicants within the study and used for analysis (*n*) was 23, or 19.5% of respondents. Figure 13 and Table 21 provide both a visual and tabular breakdown of participant race. Figure 13 also includes the breakdown by gender of the sample pool of participants.

Figure 13

Demographics of Valid Survey Respondents

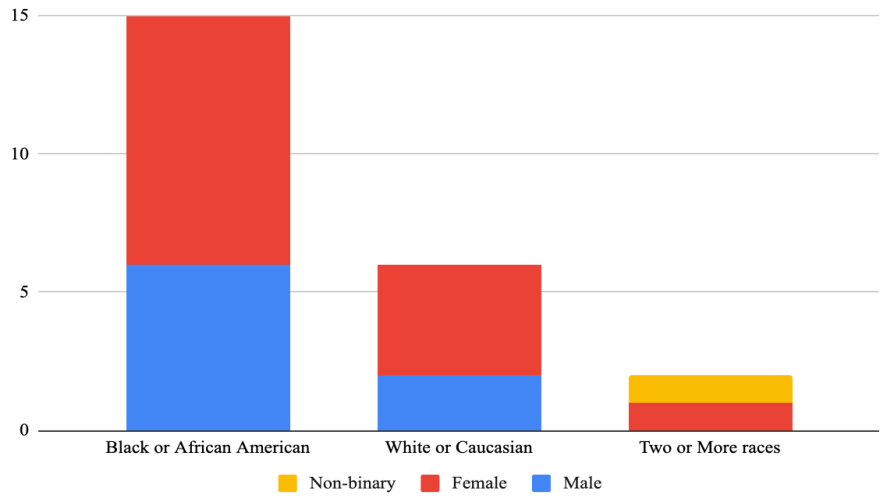


Table 21

Participant Race

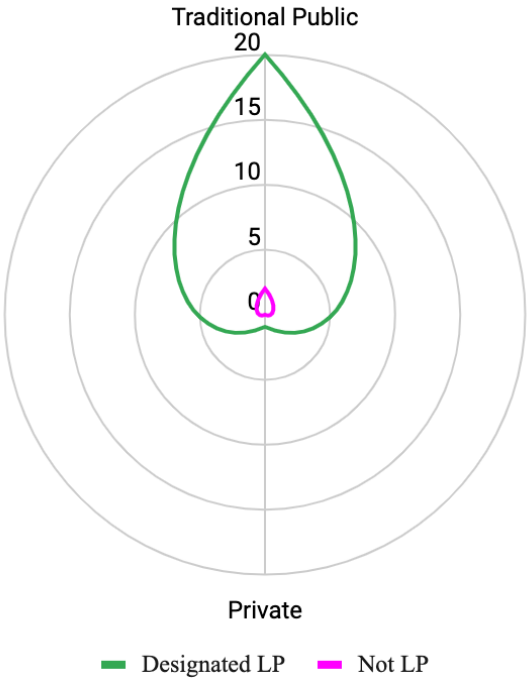
Race	Frequency	Percent
Asian, Other, Prefer not to say	1	4.3
Black or African American	15	65.2
Black or African American, Asian	1	4.3
White or Caucasian	6	26.1
Total	23	100.0

From this pool of participants, 60.9% (*n* = 23) identified as female, 34.8% identified as male, and 4.3% identified as nonbinary. Additionally, 60.0% of participants did not identify as being a member of the LGBTQIA+ community and 39.1% of participants identified as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community. Furthermore, 17.4% of participants identified as having a disability, 17.4% preferred not to state having or not having a disability, and 65.2% identified themselves as not having a disability. As seen in Figure 13, the largest percentage of participants by race and gender were Black or African American women, which represented 64.3% of a total of 14 female participants or 39.1% of participants (*n* = 23). Twenty-one point seven percent identified as being from Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin.

The median age of participants ranged between 41–45 years of age, with 60.9% (*n* = 23) of participants having had 10 or more years of experience in education, and 43.5% (*n* = 23) indicating they have had more than 15 years of experience in education. Figure 14 offers a visualization of the ratio of participants identifying their school as designated low-performing and the school type (private, charter, or traditional public). Most respondents (90.3%; *n* = 23) shared they worked for a school currently designated as low-performing, and 95.7% of respondents indicated they currently worked in a traditional public school.

Figure 14

School Types



Four SBE regions house the 10 largest school districts in NC. Of the eight SBE designated regions of NC, six were represented by survey respondents. The two regions not represented (0.0% participation) in the survey were the Southwest region and the Sandhills region. The Southwest region houses four of the 10 largest school districts in the state, one of which is the second largest. The Sandhills region houses one of the largest five school districts in the state. Additionally, three of the five plaintiffs from *Leandro* were in the Sandhills region. At 43.5% (*n* = 23), most survey participants originated from the Piedmont-Triad region. The Piedmont-Triad region contains two of the five largest school districts in the state. Furthermore, 21.7% of survey participants identified as being from the Northwest region, 17.4% from the North Central region, 8.7% from the Southeast region, 4.4% from the Western region, and 4.4%

identified as from the Northeast region. The North Central region houses three of the 10 largest school districts in NC, one of which is the largest school district.

To serve as a point of reference, the three largest NC public school districts house over 100 schools each (nearly 200 for the largest school district). The next two school districts house less than 90 schools each. From there, schools within districts range between 3–56. Figure 15 provides a map of the eight state regions and Table 22 includes the percentage of participants from each region. Districts in black identify districts not represented by the survey results. All other districts depict increasing frequencies of participants, which is represented by increasing changes in opacity and tone. For example, the Northeast and Western regions are represented by the least opaque color because the smallest number of participants originated from these two regions. The Piedmont-Triad region is the opaquest and with a darker tone to represent the highest frequency of participants.

Figure 15

NC SBE Region Locations of the Participant Pool

Table 22

Percentage of Participants from Each Region

Region	Frequency	Percent
Southwest	0	0.0
Sandhills	0	0.0
Northeast	1	4.4
Western	1	4.4
Southeast	2	8.7
North Central	4	17.4
Northwest	5	21.7
Piedmont-Triad	10	43.5
Total	23	100.0

Survey Subscale Results

The survey was composed of 40 items categorized under eight subscales. Cronbach Alpha's coefficient for the overall survey was 0.911, suggesting overall excellent internal consistency among all survey questions. The first seven subscales used a Likert agreement theme, and the eighth subscale followed a Likert frequency theme. The agreement scales included five agreements: *strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, strongly agree*. The frequency subscale was composed of three frequency options: *never, sometimes, often.* Each subscale represented one question composed of either two, four, or six items. Each subscale item of the survey displayed a negative skewness (see Table 23), except for the Transformation subscale—Item Q26e. This indicated the median, which was more resistant to outliers, was a more appropriate central measure of tendency for relatively all subscale items within this survey's results.

Table 23

Skewness of Survey Subscale Items

	Skewness	
	Statistic	Std. Error
a. Willingness	-1.924	.481
b. Willingness	-1.913	.481
c. Willingness	-1.920	.481
d. Willingness	-1.863	.481
a. Educational Supports	-1.261	.481
b. Educational Supports	-.798	.481
c. Educational Supports	-.237	.481
d. Educational Supports	-.580	.481
a. Dedication to Change	-2.512	.481
b. Dedication to Change	-1.217	.481
c. Dedication to Change	-1.513	.481
d. Dedication to Change	-.468	.481
e. Dedication to Change	-1.231	.481
f. Dedication to Change	-1.311	.481
a. Power Distribution	-.797	.481
b. Power Distribution	-1.814	.481
c. Power Distribution	-.439	.481
d. Power Distribution	-1.154	.481
e. Power Distribution	-1.223	.481
f. Power Distribution	-1.329	.481
a. Democratic Schooling	-.916	.481
b. Democratic Schooling	-.317	.481
c. Democratic Schooling	-.883	.481
d. Democratic Schooling	-1.188	.481
e. Democratic Schooling	-1.485	.481
f. Democratic Schooling	-.806	.481
a. Pervasiveness of Racism	-1.167	.481
b. Pervasiveness of Racism	-.601	.481
c. Pervasiveness of Racism	-1.045	.481
d. Pervasiveness of Racism	-1.978	.481
e. Pervasiveness of Racism	-1.045	.481
f. Pervasiveness of Racism	-.165	.481
a. Transformation	-.767	.481
b. Transformation	-.767	.481

c. Transformation	-.723	.481
d. Transformation	-.096	.481
e. Transformation	.282	.481
f. Transformation	-.093	.481

Subscale Analysis

Willingness to Change (Q19). The first subscale, Q19, consisted of four items measuring willingness. Participants were asked to indicate willingness using agreement scales, perceived belief in the potential for change, and self-identified efforts to change or improve. With Sig (2-Tailed) values less than 0.001 across each item under Q19, Table 24 indicates subscale items of willingness were significantly correlated and all at the 0.01 level with each correlation coefficient ranging between 0.629–0.89. All same item to same item correlations were ignored, such as Q19c to Q19c, because they did not offer significance or value contributing to findings. Item to item correlations compared an item to itself and only yielded a 1.0 correlation coefficient.

Table 24

Spearman's Rho Correlations for Q19

		a. Willingness	b. Willingness	c. Willingness	d. Willingness
a. Willingness	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.729**	.890**	.778**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	< .001	<.001	<.001
	n	23	23	23	23
b. Willingness	Correlation Coefficient	.729**	1.000	.864**	.629**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.	<.001	.001
	n	23	23	23	23
c. Willingness	Correlation Coefficient	.890**	.864**	1.000	.688**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	.	<.001
	n	23	23	23	23
d. Willingness	Correlation Coefficient	.778**	.629**	.688**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.001	<.001	.
	n	23	23	23	23

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The resulting rho coefficients, which were each positive and of a value greater than 0.5, denoted a strong magnitude of relationship between items within the scale factor of Willingness. The resulting positive correlations denoted a relationship that travels in the same trajectory. For example, this could be a leader indicating a high agreement in *Q19a. I believe that current school practices can be improved* and likely have a high agreement with *Q19b. I encourage and support changes in school/district/organizational practices to improve student learning*, with *Q19c. I am willing to try new strategies and school/district/organization protocols*, with *Q19d. I work cooperatively with leadership (at all levels) to make appropriate changes in the school*, and any combination of items within Q19. Conversely, a leader with a lower agreement of any item under Q19 invariably indicated lower agreement in any subsequent item under Q19. For example, a leader who encourages and supports changes is also unlikely to be willing to try new strategies and protocols. Figure 16 offers a visualization of significant and moderately highly correlated items in Q19.

Figure 16

Correlations Across the Willingness Subscale (Q19)

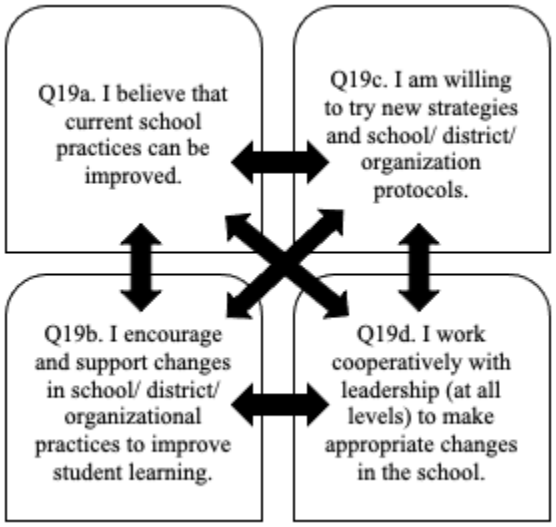


Table 25 identifies all items in Q19 asking questions around a respondent's consent, desire, or attitude toward changing school practices. Q19 was composed of four minimally modified items taken from Q10 a readiness for change subscale of Organizational Readiness to Change Assessment (ORCA) assessment. Q10 was one of two subscales assessing leadership practice. Q19 aligned to the *Opinion Leaders' [readiness for change]* subscale. It was an informal measure of leadership on ORCA, which Helfrich et al. (2009) indicated was focused on "attitudes of opinion leaders for practice change in general" (p. 4). The ORCA instrument was theory based. It was developed as a measurement instrument to operationalize the constructs defined in the Promoting Action on Research Implementation in Health Services (PARIHS) framework. PARIHS is characterized as a "broad framework to guide development of a program of implementation interventions that effectively enable [evidenced-based practice] related changes" (Stetler et al., 2011, p. 2). The ORCA survey was not validated beyond test-retest

reliability, and each generated favorable internal reliability results. Cronbach's alpha for scale reliability for the Q10 was 0.91.

Table 25

Agreement Percentage for Willingness Subscale (Q19)

Q19: Willingness	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Q19a. As an educational leader - I believe that current school practices can be improved.	8.7	0.0	4.3	39.1	47.8
Q19b. As an educational leader - I encourage and support changes in school/district/organizational practices to improve student learning.	4.3	0.0	8.7	39.1	47.8
Q19c. As an educational leader - I am willing to try new strategies and school/district/organization protocols.	4.3	4.3	4.3	30.4	56.5
Q19d. As an educational leader - I work cooperatively with leadership (at all levels) to make appropriate changes in the school.	4.3	0.0	8.7	43.5	43.5

Q19 was composed of four questions and the subscale's Cronbach's alpha coefficient of reliability was 0.95. Thus, Q19 showed internal consistency and very nearly redundancy. Q19 scale items had a shared covariance, and they likely measured the same underlying concept. For each item, the agreement most often selected was strongly agreed.

The percent agreement for each item was 86.9%, with 5 (i.e., strongly agree) as the agreement value appearing the most often among all valid participant responses. The median for

all except Q19c with a 5 was a 4. The subscale items under Q19 and their corresponding agreement percent are provided in Table 25.

Disagreements on Available Supports (Q20). The second subscale, Q20, also consisted of four items measuring perceived educational supports including resource allocation. Items in Q20 asked questions around a respondent's availability of resources or supports necessary for change. Q20 was composed of four items taken from Q11 a readiness for change subscale of ORCA. Helfrich et al. (2009) shared a general availability of necessary resources is a determinant of successful implementation. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for Q11 was 0.86 and measured *General Resources* [for change]. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for Q20 was 0.853, suggesting good internal reliability among the subscale items.

With Sig (2-Tailed) values less than or equal to 0.03 between Q20a and Q20b; Q20a and Q20c; Q20b and Q20c; and Q20c and Q20d, Table 26 indicates only combinations among these items within the subscale of educational supports were significantly correlated. The resulting rho coefficients, which were each positive and of a value greater than 0.5, denoted a strong magnitude of relationship between items a–b, a–c, b–c, and c–d of Q20 about educational supports. The resulting positive correlations denoted a direct relationship whereas one item agreement was high, so was the correlating item. Conversely, when one item agreement was low, so was its correlating item agreement.

Table 26

Spearman's Rho Correlations for Q20

		a. Educational Supports	b. Educational Supports	c. Educational Supports	d. Educational Supports
a. Educational Supports	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.602**	.620**	.388

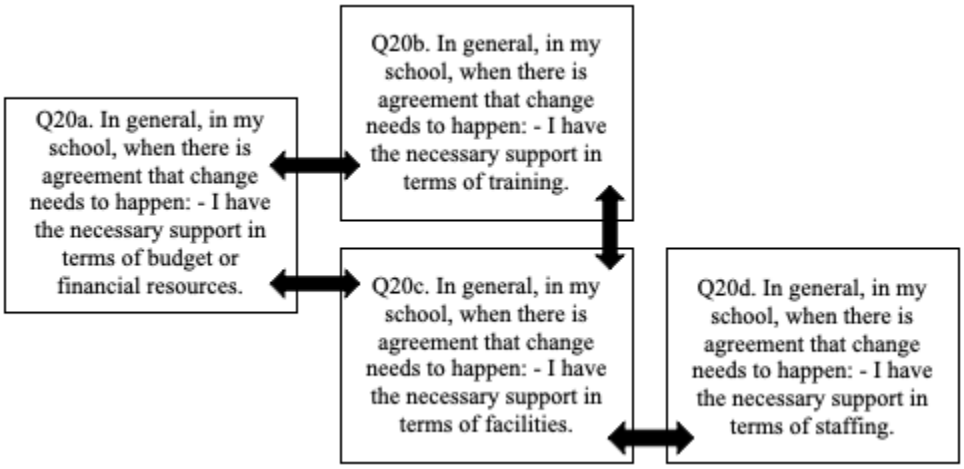
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.002	.002	.067
	n	23	23	23	23
b. Educational Supports	Correlation Coefficient	.602**	1.000	.583**	.399
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.	.003	.059
	n	23	23	23	23
c. Educational Supports	Correlation Coefficient	.620**	.583**	1.000	.673**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.003	.	<.001
	n	23	23	23	23
d. Educational Supports	Correlation Coefficient	.388	.399	.673**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.067	.059	<.001	.
	n	23	23	23	23

The correlation coefficients suggested a leader sharing a high agreement with *Q20a. I have the necessary support in terms of budget or financial resources for example*, likely has a high agreement with *Q20b. I have the necessary support in terms of training;* and additionally, with *Q20c. I have the necessary support in terms of facilities.* Furthermore, leaders with a high agreement with *Q20c. I have the necessary support in terms of facilities*, very likely indicates a high level of agreement with *Q20d. I have the necessary support in terms of staffing*, although it is not as likely a leader indicates similar levels of agreement with both *20b. I have the necessary support in terms of training* and *Q20d. I have the necessary support in terms of staffing*.

The remaining two combinations—Q20a and Q20d and Q20b and Q20d—were approaching significance and moderately correlated. Although the correlation was not significant relative to the standard alpha level of .05 for Q20a and Q20d and Q20b and Q20d, the *p*-value was less than 0.10. A *p*-value less than 0.10 suggests the observed correlation coefficient may just be for the sample of school leaders in this study and cannot be extrapolated to the population of NC school leaders. Figure 17 indicates the significant relationship between items within the Educational Supports subscale.

Figure 17

Extremely Significant and Correlated Relationships in Q20



Each item response average within the educational supports subscale ranged from 3.3 to 3.6, suggesting, on average, participants neither agreed nor disagreed with their perceived availability or access to resources. The percent agreement for each item was greater than 60.0%, except for one item in which 47.8% somewhat to strongly agreed if change were needed at the school, they had the necessary support in terms of facilities; 34.8% of participants indicated they neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement; and 17.4% somewhat to strongly disagreed their school building was sufficient as is, for when change needs to happen. The subscale item agreement percentages of Q20 are provided in Table 27. The median for all except Q20c with a 3 was a 4.

Table 27

Agreement Percentage for Educational Supports Subscale (Q20)

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Q20a. In general, in my school, when there is agreement that change needs to happen - I have the necessary support in terms of budget or financial resources.	8.7	8.7	8.7	60.9	13.0
Q20b. In general, in my school, when there is agreement that change needs to happen - I have the necessary support in terms of training.	8.7	17.4	4.3	43.5	26.1
Q20c. In general, in my school, when there is agreement that change needs to happen - I have the necessary support in terms of facilities.	4.3	17.4	30.4	30.4	17.4
Q20d. In general, in my school, when there is agreement that change needs to happen - I have the necessary support in terms of staffing.	8.7	21.7	8.7	47.8	13.0

When compared to leaders' perceived willingness to change in Q19, leaders' perceived access to educational support to make change hold a lower agreement overall and by item. The most notable concern appeared to be around school facilities. With less than 50% agreement for Item Q20c, survey results indicated there exists an overwhelming concern around the physical space in which education occurs (Q20c. facilities), and relatively moderate concern around the people supporting the day-to-day education of students (Q20b. training; Q20d. staff).

Deceptive Self-Perceptions (Q21). The third subscale, Q21, consisted of six items measuring the TLT domain specific to a mandate for change. A school leader with a mandate for

change has an attitudinal presence signifying a dedication to equitable change. Items in Q21 ask questions around a respondent's perceived commitment, motivation, and readiness to seek equitable change at the school.

Items under subscale Q21 were modified and taken from the following surveys or questionnaires: Organizational Readiness for Implementing Change (ORIC), School Heads' Leadership Practices (SLPQ), Educators Scale of Student Diversity (ESSD), and Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Questionnaire (CCSAQ). Under ORIC, items aligned to readiness for change. Under SLPQ, items were selected from the Commitment subscale. Under ESSD, items were borrowed from the Culturally Responsive Instruction (CRI) subscale or category, and under CCSAQ, items used were from within the Staffing category of questions.

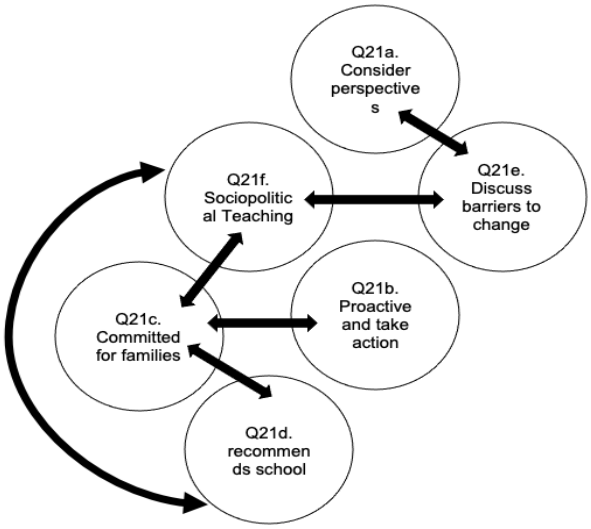
ORIC is a theory-based survey. Hamilton et al. (2011) shared ORIC originated with B. J. Weiner's (2009) theory of organizational readiness for change. ORIC is based on "the staff's ability to initiate change, put forth greater effort, be persistent, and cooperate with one another to implement the change" and follows a more traditional readiness for change questionnaire requiring that the researcher assess various levels of the organization (Hamilton et al., 2011, p. xx). SLPQ is a researcher-made questionnaire checked by experts and pilot-tested with school heads using a 6-point Likert scale. The overall questionnaire displayed excellent reliability with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.95. The Commitment subscale under SLPQ is categorized as an administrative disposition (as with empathy, tolerance, and honesty). CRI under ESSD was developed by Patel (2017) and consisted of six questions in ESSD in which scores indicated belief curriculum and instruction should include culturally relevant and sustaining components embracing the cultural and social capital of students as outlined by Ladson-Billings (1995), Banks (2004), and Gay (2010) to improve student achievement.

The Staffing subscale under CCSAQ addresses “the recruitment and retention of diverse staff, preparation of new staff, training activities convened by the agency” (Mason, 1995, p. 52) as well as other activities related to the cultural awareness of staff. Together, Q21 consisted of items aligning to questions validated for subscales on change implementation, commitment to change, belief in the value of students’ social and cultural wealth to impact achievement, and actions encouraging the diversification of and cultural awareness of staff. For the purpose of this study, items under Q21 aligned to a leader’s mandate for change. According to Shields (2018, 2020), a dedication to equitable change requires a leader to identify new approaches to address inequity (staff subscale), to apply constant questioning leading to creative new approaches (CRI subscale), to understand the community (staffing and CRI subscales), and to maintain a commitment to address inequity (readiness and commitment subscales). Q21 within this survey maintained good internal reliability with a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.863.

Subscale Q21 offered sig (2-Tailed) values at 0.01 and 0.05 levels, indicating significant relationships exist between items within the subscale, some more significant than others. The patterns of correlation significant at the 0.01 level are visually depicted in Figure 18.

Figure 18

Extremely Significant and Correlated Relationships in Q21



The patterns of correlation significant at the 0.001 and at the 0.05 levels are provided in Table 28. Survey results indicate school leaders in NC who perceive themselves as being committed to implementing equitable change for students and families also hold a belief in adding sociopolitical context to teaching, are proactive in taking actions for change, and would recommend their own school to family and friends. Though the same leaders would recommend their schools to loved ones would likely also support sociopolitical context in the curriculum and in instruction, it is not necessarily likely these same leaders that would be motivated to consider others' perspectives and discuss barriers to implement deep equitable change.

Table 28

Spearman's Rho Correlations for Q21

		a. Dedication to change	b. Dedication to change	c. Dedication to change	d. Dedication to change	e. Dedication to change	f. Dedication to change
a. Dedication to change	Correlation coefficient	1.000	.213	.478*	.376	.561**	.460*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.329	.021	.077	.005	.027
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23
b. Dedication to change	Correlation coefficient	.213	1.000	.617**	.343	.091	.297
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.329	.	.002	.109	.681	.168
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23
c. Dedication to change	Correlation Coefficient	.478*	.617**	1.000	.580**	.262	.626**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.021	.002	.	.004	.227	.001
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23
d. Dedication to change	Correlation Coefficient	.376	.343	.580**	1.000	.367	.564**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.077	.109	.004	.	.085	.005
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23
e. Dedication to change	Correlation Coefficient	.561**	.091	.262	.367	1.000	.604**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.681	.227	.085	.	.002
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23
f. Dedication to change	Correlation Coefficient	.460*	.297	.626**	.564**	.604**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.027	.168	.001	.005	.002	.
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23

Note. *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There was a significant though moderate correlation between NC school leaders who perceived themselves as being motivated to consider other perspectives and committed to implementing equitable change for students and families. There was also a significant and moderate correlation between motivated leaders and their agreement that teachers should include

sociopolitical context in their curriculum and instruction. Sociopolitical context was defined to survey respondents as referring to the practices, beliefs, conditions, policies, laws, traditions, and events that define and shape a given society, community, or network.

Results from Q21, as displayed in Table 29, indicate strong agreement to leaders' perceived dedication to equitable change (i.e., considering others' perspectives, being proactive in making change, and considering cultural relevance in curriculum and instruction). It is assumed a leader who genuinely perceives themselves to be dedicated to change does not hesitate to recommend their school to people close to them. The greater than 20 percentage point gap in agreement for Q21d across all other items under Q21 thus suggests a lesser dedication (and possible genuineness) to making successful and sustaining change. All but Q21b and Q21c shared a median of 4, indicating agreement across all Q21 subscale items, and strong agreement (median of 5) with Q21b and Q21c.

Table 29

Agreement Percentage for Dedication to Equitable Change Subscale (Q21)

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Q21a. To what extent do you agree with these items? - I am motivated to consider other perspectives.	4.3	0.0	0.0	47.8	47.8
Q21b. To what extent do you agree with these items? - I am proactive and take action unprompted.	0.0	17.4	4.3	17.4	60.9
Q21c. To what extent do you agree with these items? - I am committed to implementing equitable change for students and families.	4.3	4.3	13.0	21.7	56.5
Q21d. To what extent do you agree with these items? - I recommend my school/district/organization to my family and friends.	8.7	13.0	26.1	30.4	21.7
Q21e. To what extent do you agree with these items? - My team routinely discusses barriers to implementing deep equitable change.	8.7	4.3	13.0	34.8	39.1
Q21f. To what extent do you agree with these items? - Teachers should include sociopolitical context in their curriculum and instruction.	4.3%	4.3%	13.0%	43.5%	34.8%

Using and Acknowledging One's Power (Q22). The fourth subscale, Q22, consisted of six items measuring the TLT domain specific to a redistribution of power. A leader who examines how power is used for good or ill (Shields, 2020) and acknowledges the "pervasiveness and hegemony of power and privilege" (Shields, 2011, p. 2) carries with them a deposition prone to addressing inequitable distributions of power. Items in Q21 were modified and taken from the Workplace Readiness Questionnaire (WRQ) and the MGH DoM Anti-RaCism (ARC) Assessment. One question was created based on the NC Statute § 115C-105.27(a) for the *Development and approval of school improvement plans* specific to parental involvement. The statute states "parents serving on school improvement teams shall reflect the

racial and socioeconomic composition of the students enrolled in that school" (para. 2). The aligned item in Q22 further builds on Goal 1 (eliminate opportunity gaps), Objective 6 (Increase the number of educators of color in schools across NC).

Hannon et al. (2017) provided details around the WRQ and its subscales and shared the WRQ was developed to assess small workplaces' readiness to adopt and implement evidence-based wellness programs. The WRQ uses Weiner's theory of readiness for change. The subscale of change efficacy, of which items are included in Q22, was influenced by change valence, or the extent to which members value a proposed changed, and focused on members' belief that they have "a collective capability to implement a change" (Hannon et al., 2017, p. xx). The ARC assessment (Burnett-Bowie et al., 2022) was developed using mostly items from the Privilege and Oppression Inventory (Hays et al., 2007), the Symbolic Racism 2000 Scale (Henry et al., 2002), and the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, 1986). Overall, ARC measured attitudes about racism and the likelihood of speaking up about racism. This research's survey used items from the bystander intervention subscale of ARC, which contributed to participants endorsement of the impact of racism in the workplace.

The combined items under Q22 explored leaders' perceived capability or power to make equitable change, and their understanding of the impact of racism. For example, a leader who acknowledges racism and its influence in the workplace, acknowledges the racialized influences of hegemony and power (Shields, 2011). Table 30 offers significance and correlation data for Subscale Q22. Though Subscale Q22 displayed acceptable internal reliability with a Cochran alpha of 0.714, there were less opportunities for significance and high correlation than in previous subscales, across items under power distribution. For example, Subscale Q22 offered

one pair of items with a significance at the 0.01 level, and three pairs significant at the 0.05 level. Figure 19 offers a visualization of these significant relationships.

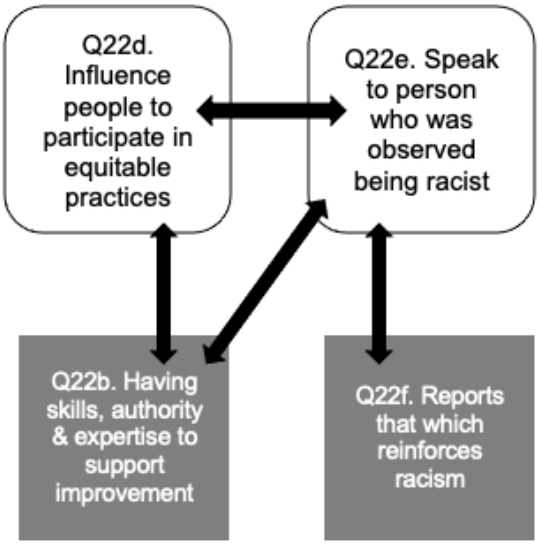
Table 30

Spearman's Rho Correlations for Q22

		a. Power distribution	b. Power distribution	c. Power distribution	d. Power distribution	e. Power distribution	f. Power distribution
a. Power distribution	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.251	.135	.166	.223	.076
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.247	.540	.448	.307	.729
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23
b. Power distribution	Correlation Coefficient	.251	1.000	.191	.483*	.454*	.330
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.247	.	.382	.020	.030	.124
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23
c. Power distribution	Correlation Coefficient	.135	.191	1.000	.130	.094	.150
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.540	.382	.	.554	.671	.496
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23
d. Power distribution	Correlation Coefficient	.166	.483*	.130	1.000	.585**	.242
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.448	.020	.554	.	.003	.266
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23
e. Power distribution	Correlation Coefficient	.223	.454*	.094	.585**	1.000	.429*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.307	.030	.671	.003	.	.041
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23
f. Power distribution	Correlation Coefficient	.076	.330	.150	.242	.429*	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.729	.124	.496	.266	.041	.
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23

Figure 19

Extremely Significant and Correlated Relationships in Q22



Q22d and Q22e shared excellent significance (at the 0.01 level), suggesting the moderate correlation observed within this survey can be applied across the population of NC school leaders (see Table 30). School leaders perceived themselves as being able to influence people (e.g., staff, community members, local businesses) and to participate in equitable practices are moderately likely to speak to an individual if they observe an overt racist encounter at their school. Additionally, a school leader self-reporting as having the skills, authority, and expertise to implement initiatives for continuous equitable improvements at the school also perceives themselves able to use their power to influence people as well as act when observing an overt racist encounter. Additionally, the leader who self-reports as acting when seeing racist encounters is moderately likely to act when encountering a practice or policy reinforcing racism. With a correlation coefficient between 0.3 and 0.5 (see Table 31), each significant pair under Subscale Q22 was positively and moderately correlated. There appeared to be a unique relationship between belief and power based on survey results as depicted by agreement

percentages for Q22 in Table 31. Consider the significant though moderate correlation between the leader who perceives themselves to have power, influencing over people as in Q22d, and the leader who acts, speaking to the person overtly or covertly racist, Q22e. In sharing a relationship, it appears having influence may contribute to acting.

Table 31

Agreement Percentage for Distributions of Power Subscale (Q22)

Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Q22a. To what extent do you agree with these items? - The staff reflects the racial and socioeconomic composition of the students we serve or support.	8.7	17.4	4.3	39.1	30.4
Q22b. To what extent do you agree with these items? - I have the skills, authority, and expertise to implement initiatives for continuous equitable improvements at my workplace.	8.7	0.0	8.7	65.2	17.4
Q22c. To what extent do you agree with these items? - The school has enough financial resources to support initiatives for continuous equitable improvements at my workplace.	13.0	21.7	8.7	43.5	13.0
Q22d. To what extent do you agree with these items? - I can influence people (i.e., staff, community members, local businesses, etc.) to participate in equitable practices.	0.0	8.7	4.3	56.5	30.4
Q22e. To what extent do you agree with these items? - When I have observed an overt or covert racist encounter at my school or district, I have spoken to the person who made the statement about it.	4.3	8.7	8.7	47.8	30.4
Q22f. To what extent do you agree with these items? - When I have learned of a practice or policy at my school or district that reinforces racism, I have reported it to a higher up.	4.3	4.3	13.0	39.1	39.1

Additionally, the percent agreement of Q22c when linked to agreement percentages of Q22a offered a unique finding. Although leaders claimed a higher agreement regarding receiving adequate financial support, that agreement diminished by nearly 20 percentage points when financial resources were linked to practicing continuous equitable improvements. The median for each item under Subscale Q22 was 4, suggesting an overall agreement across all items within distributions of power.

Conditions for Learning (Q23). The fifth subscale, Q23, consisted of six items measuring the TLT domain on emancipation, democracy, inclusion, and equity. A leader focused on the democratization of schooling takes responsibility for change, provides conditions under which students can learn freely, and has knowledge of equity used to overcome deficit thinking. Items in Q23 were developed from items within the commitment and instructional directives subscales of SLPQ, as well as the resources and linkages subscale of CCSAQ.

The commitment subscale under SLPQ was categorized as an administrative disposition and instructional directives were categorized as management skills. Both addressed the need for a leader be "prepared to deal with the inevitable social, cultural, economic, technological, bureaucratic, and political obstacles that can block improvements efforts" (Cunningham & Cordeiro, 2015, p. 137 as cited in Villar et al., 2021). The resources and linkages subscale offered insight into an organization's ability to develop networks of support as part of a "comprehensive system of care" (Mason, 1995). Commitment, instructional directives, and resources and linkages subscales combined to form the Q23 subscale on the democratization of schooling. As such, Q23 offered an indication of the leader's perceived skills (i.e., knowledge), administrative dispositions, and networking abilities that may drive conditions under which students can learn freely and fairly (Shields, 2018). The Q23 subscale displayed a good internal

reliability with a Cochran alpha of 0.798. Table 32 offers a breakdown of agreement percentages based on survey responses of subscale Q23.

Table 32

Agreement Percentage for the Democratization of Schooling Subscale (Q23)

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Q23a. To what extent do you agree with these items? - I am responsive to the diverse needs (i.e., ethnic, language, disability, gender, racial, etc.) of staff, students, and families rather than just my own point of view when designing systems and structures for teaching and learning.	0.0	4.3	8.7	56.5	30.4
Q23b. To what extent do you agree with these items? - Staff members have access to anti-racist materials (books, video, etc.).	0.0	17.4	21.7	34.8	26.1
Q23c. To what extent do you agree with these items? - Our school uses interpreters to work with linguistically diverse students.	0.0	17.4	8.7	26.1	47.8
Q23d. To what extent do you agree with these items? - I involve a diverse representation of staff and students in making decisions in areas like hiring, instructional initiatives, school improvement goals, etc.	0.0	4.3	4.3	52.2	39.1
Q23e. To what extent do you agree with these items? - I am considerate to the needs of every subgroup in my school, at the exclusion of no group.	4.3	8.7	4.3	34.8	47.8
Q23f. To what extent do you agree with these items? - I use different ways to develop a strong relationship among all staff and students.	0.0	0.0	4.3	39.1	56.5

The data indicated agreement was lowest for Item Q23b (60.9%) around access to antiracist materials. Item Q23b's agreement difference exceeded 20 percentage points for every other item under subscale Q23 except for Q23c (73.9%). Even when compared with item Q21f within the dedication to equitable change subscale that speaks to the inclusion of sociopolitical

context in teaching, Item Q23b carried a nearly 20 percentage point gap agreement difference. Extrapolated from this difference in agreement was the sentiment approving the inclusion of sociopolitical context in curriculum and instruction may be agreed upon, but it was quite another sentiment as evidenced by declined agreement, to promote antiracist teaching. This suggested a dedication to equitable change as a disposition in NC leaders, and possibly arguing for democracy, has boundaries.

Unique to this subscale was only one item—Q23e—which included responses across all five agreement scales. With one of the higher agreement percentages within this subscale—Item Q23e (82.6%)—nearly one fifth (17.4%; *n* = 23) of respondents indicated a strong disagreement up to a level of ambivalence on the statement *I am considerate to the needs of every subgroup in my school, at the exclusion of no group*. Table 33 displays significance and correlation data on items within subscale Q23.

Table 33

Spearman's Rho Correlations for Q23

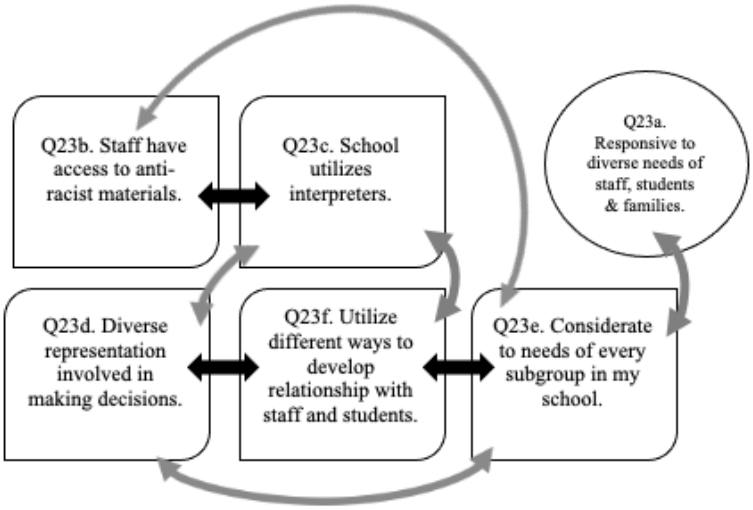
		a. Dem. schooling	b. Dem. schooling	c. Dem. schooling	d. Dem. schooling	e. Dem. schooling	f. Dem. schooling
a. Dem. schooling	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.209	.320	.144	.458*	.411
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.339	.137	.513	.028	.052
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23
b. Dem. schooling	Correlation Coefficient	.209	1.000	.695**	.362	.484*	.334
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.339	.	<.001	.090	.019	.119
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23
c. Dem. schooling	Correlation Coefficient	.320	.695**	1.000	.499*	.364	.499*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.137	<.001	.	.015	.088	.015
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23
d. Dem. schooling	Correlation Coefficient	.144	.362	.499*	1.000	.491*	.705**

		a. Dem. schooling	b. Dem. schooling	c. Dem. schooling	d. Dem. schooling	e. Dem. schooling	f. Dem. schooling
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.513	.090	.015	.	.017	<.001
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23
e. Dem. schooling	Correlation Coefficient	.458*	.484*	.364	.491*	1.000	.529**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.028	.019	.088	.017	.	.010
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23
f. Dem. schooling	Correlation Coefficient	.411	.334	.499*	.705**	.529**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.052	.119	.015	<.001	.010	.
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23

Correlations between significant items under Subscales Q21 and Q23 suggested there was significant though moderately direct correlations, with coefficients between 0.5 and 0.7, between items Q23b and Q23c, Q23d and Q23f, and Q23e and Q23f, as depicted in Figure 20. All other significant correlations coefficients under subscale Q23 were weak. Remaining correlations approaching significance were also weak. School leaders who self-reported as involving both a broad and diverse representation of stakeholders to support decision making, likely use different ways to build positive student-adult relationships, and likely consider the needs of all subgroups in the school. Separately, NC school leaders who perceive staff to have access to antiracist materials, likely offer language access. These correlating instances offered positive conditions for student learning (e.g., access to resources like antiracist materials and interpreters) that help in part to implement inclusive, democratic, and socially just practices.

Figure 20

Significant and Correlated Relationships in Q23



Valuing Self and Others (Q24). Capability refers to having moral resources like solidarity, and to the belief in a person's ability to be valuable and to act in a way that values the self and others (Sen, 1993). In the context of Subscale Q24, this belief extends to a belief in the innovative abilities of students and families and the belief in self to do "valuable acts" or to have a "valuable state of being" (Sen, 1993, p. 30). Items within Subscale Q24 were reduced prior to publishing the survey based on expert feedback and copyright restrictions, resulting in Q24 having a total of two items. Items within Subscale Q24 on capability used a question from the establishing effective functional teams subscale of the SLPQ (Villar et al., 2021) and another from ORIC (Hamilton et al., 2011).

Table 34 provides the agreement percentages for Q24 but due to having a negative Cochran alpha, the capability subscale value was not reliable and data for this subscale cannot be used to inform NC school leaders' perceptions. A negative value was due to a negative average covariance among the two items, thereby violating reliability model assumptions. Furthermore,

and as seen in Table 35, none of the items under Subscale Q24 were nearing significance or better or had anything other than weak correlation coefficient.

Table 34

Agreement Percentage for Capability Subscale (Q24)

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. Capability	8.7	0.0	4.3	34.8	52.2
b. Capability	4.3	0.0	34.8	30.4	30.4

Table 35

Spearman's Rho Correlations for Q24

		a. Capability	b. Capability
a. Capability	Correlation coefficient	1.000	.058
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.794
	N	23	23
b. Capability	Correlation coefficient	.058	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.794	.
	N	23	23

Normalized Racism (Q25). Items under Q25 were created using questions from the ARC assessment (Burnette-Bowie et al., 2022) originating from the White privilege awareness subscale within the Privilege and Oppression Inventory (POI; Hays et al., 2007). One item was from the knowledge category of the Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Questionnaire (CCSAQ) and influenced by the Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist (Mason, 1995). The ARC assessment was created as part of a research on health to assess whether attitudes about the impact of racism on health or society are associated with intervening around racism. The assessment was partially validated. The items primarily used for this research focused on assessing the impact of racism. The POI is a social justice focused Multicultural Counseling

Competency inventory developed to assess counselors. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for internal consistency reliability of POI was high (0.95), with the privilege awareness subscale at a 0.92. The CCSAQ was created by the Portland Research and Training Center (Mason, 1995). The Cultural Competence Self-Assessment instrument was designed to be a self-assessment tool to explore individual cultural competence.

This subscale was tagged as pervasiveness of racism because it was heavily influenced by items within the ARC assessment and the POI. Q25 also had some alignment to the balance critique and promise dispositional domain as well. In Shields's (2020) reflections, a transformative leader prioritizing this domain reflects on which groups or individuals have been marginalized in the school, and often asks key equity questions such as (a) who is excluded and who is included, (b) who is advantaged and who is disadvantaged, and (c) who is marginalized and who is privileged? Because Q25 did not explicitly ask leaders to share their agreement on the need for current practices to be challenged or questioned, or whether they agreed they push back to affect change (Shields, 2018), the subscale more aptly measured perceptions regarding leaders' awareness on race, racism, or privilege. The resulting Cronbach's alpha for all items under Q25 was 0.807. Table 36 provides the percent agreement for Q25, subscale on the pervasiveness of racism.

Table 36

Agreement Percentage for the Pervasiveness of Racism Subscale (Q25)

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Q25a. Read each entry and select the option that best represents your opinion. - I make mistakes and learn from them.	0.0	0.0	0.0	26.1	73.9

Q25b. Read each entry and select the option that best represents your opinion. - Government policies favor White people.	0.0	0.0	17.4	34.8	47.8
Q25c. Read each entry and select the option that best represents your opinion. - Being White and having an advantage go hand in hand.	0.0	8.7	8.7	43.5	39.1
Q25d. Read each entry and select the option that best represents your opinion. - Stereotypical attitudes and discriminatory actions can dehumanize and even encourage challenging/disciplinary behaviors at school.	4.3	0.0	8.7	34.8	52.2
Q25e. Read each entry and select the option that best represents your opinion. - White cultural characteristics are more valued than those of people of color.	0.0	8.7	8.7	43.5	39.1
Q25f. Read each entry and select the option that best represents your opinion. - The lighter your skin color, the less prejudice and discrimination you experience.	0.0	13.0	30.4	39.1	17.4

The percent agreement for items under Q25 was lowest for Q25f (56.5%) for the statement *The lighter your skin color, the less prejudice and discrimination you experience*, and highest for Q25a (100%) for the statement, *I make mistakes and learn from them*. Q25a was included in this subscale to determine the potential relationship between perceived adaptability and racial awareness. Removing Q25a from the subscale pervasiveness of racism improved internal reliability by increasing the Cronbach's alpha from 0.807 to 0.818. Figure 21 provides a visualization of the significant correlations in Q25. Q25c, *Being White and having an advantage go hand in hand* and Q25e, *The lighter your skin color, the less prejudice and discrimination you experience*; and Q25e, *White cultural characteristics are more valued than those of people of color* and Q25f, *The lighter your skin color, the less prejudice and discrimination you experience* were the only two significant (at the level of 0.01) items under Q25 with greater than 0.7 correlation coefficient (moderate and nearing high correlation). Q25c and Q25e were the highest with 0.81 correlation (see Table 37). The relationship between Q25c, Q25e, and Q25f is depicted in Figure 21 and identified in green (green, accent 6, lighter 80%).

Table 37

Spearman's Rho Correlations (Q25)

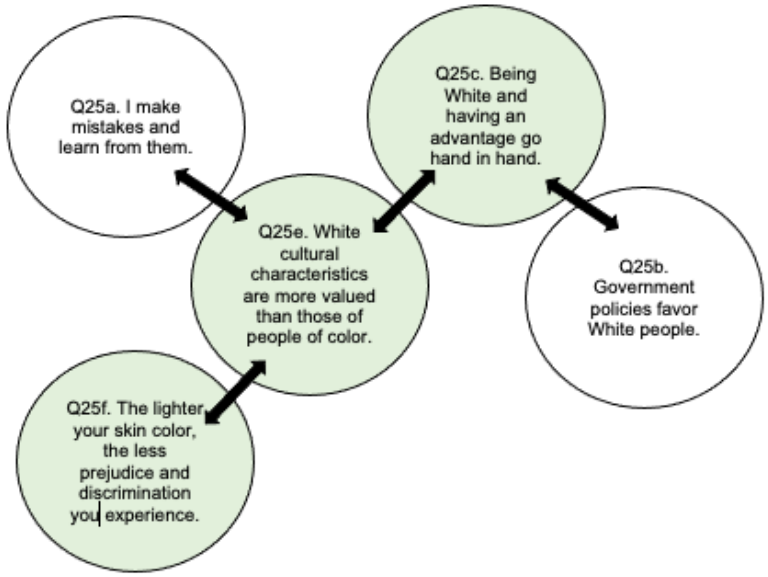
		a. PoR	b. PoR	c. PoR	d. PoR	e. PoR	f. PoR
a. PoR	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.130	.338	.223	.564**	.172
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.555	.114	.306	.005	.431
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23
b. PoR	Correlation Coefficient	.130	1.000	.531**	.305	.443*	.357
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.555	.	.009	.156	.034	.095
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23
c. PoR	Correlation Coefficient	.338	.531**	1.000	.474*	.781**	.517*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.114	.009	.	.022	<.001	.011
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23
d. PoR	Correlation Coefficient	.223	.305	.474*	1.000	.449*	.465*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.306	.156	.022	.	.032	.025
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23
e. PoR	Correlation Coefficient	.564**	.443*	.781**	.449*	1.000	.714**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.034	<.001	.032	.	<.001
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23
f. PoR	Correlation Coefficient	.172	.357	.517*	.465*	.714**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.431	.095	.011	.025	<.001	.
	n	23	23	23	23	23	23

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Figure 21

Extremely Significant and Correlated Relationships in Q25



Racialized Schooling Contrasting Frequencies Between Observation and Action.

Q26 was the only frequency Likert scale data point. Q25 was a combination of items aligned to the four dispositional domains outlined in TLT. As such, Q25 was categorized as racialized school transformation. It was labeled with transformation because of the dispositional factors to which it was aligned and racialized because it addressed race and privilege. All items without proper permission or approval were appropriately removed prior to dissemination except for Q26f. Although it appeared approval would be granted, additional next steps were requested from the researcher upon the release of the survey. Approval was not confirmed and as such Q26f was removed from the subscale results. Without Q26f, the Cronbach's alpha for Q26 was 0.743 (it is 0.734 with Q26f).

Q26 was the only subscale using frequency rather than agreement. This was because all items under Q26 identified the frequency of acts or behaviors aligned to TLT, NC leaders self-

report as performing in the last 12 months. Table 38 shows frequency of observed behaviors and actions taken on these behaviors by NC leaders.

Table 38

Agreement Percentage for Racialized School Transformation Subscale (Q26)

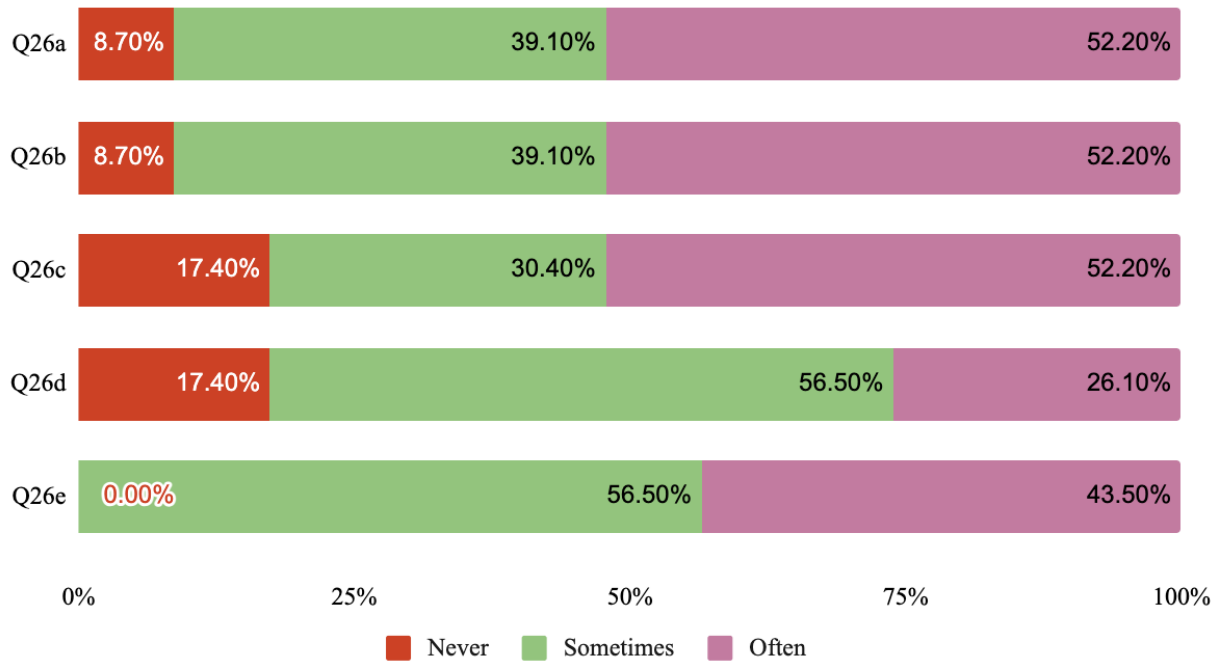
Question	Never	Sometimes	Often
Q26a. How often have you completed the following behaviors in the last 12 months? - I effectively intervene when I observe others behaving in a racist and/or discriminatory manner.	8.7	39.1	52.2
Q26b. How often have you completed the following behaviors in the last 12 months? - I am learning about specific policies and procedures related to eliminating opportunity gaps.	8.7	39.1	52.2
Q26c. How often have you completed the following behaviors in the last 12 months? - I have taken action to address a practice or policy at my school or district that reinforces racism.	17.4	30.4	52.2
Q26d. How often have you completed the following behaviors in the last 12 months? - I have observed an overt or covert racist encounter at my school or district.	17.4	56.5	26.1
Q26e. How often have you completed the following behaviors in the last 12 months? - I have felt safe to take social risks (e.g., asking questions, making mistakes, highlighting problems) in my school or district.	0.0	56.5	43.5
Q26f. *Item removed because permission was not received. Q26f is similar to Q26a but specific to cultural insensitivity, racial biases, and prejudice.*	0.0	47.8	52.2

Figure 22 provides a visual of the frequency from never, sometimes, and often of items under Q26. It can be seen Item Q26d had a high frequency of “never” (17.4%) and the lowest frequency of “often” (26.1%). Alternatively, Item 26c had the highest frequency of “never” (17.4%) alongside Q26d and, simultaneously, it had one of the highest frequencies of “often” (52.2%) under Q26. Item Q26e had the lowest frequency of “never” (0.0%). A unique finding was approximately 1 out of 10 leaders did not intervene when observing a racist behavior, but

approximately 1 out of 5 leaders had not observed overt or covert racist behaviors at their schools. There appears to be some inconsistency across statements Q26a and Q26d. For example, results assumed an individual would only intervene when there is an act or behavior to intervene, having more responses sharing there was nothing racist to have intervened about in the last 12 months appears improbable. These findings offered part of the story of the NC leader, but population insights may be best elucidated upon by qualitative means. Triangulation and further explanations to these quantitative findings are explored within the qualitative phase of this research.

Figure 22

Frequency of Observations and Interventions to Racist Acts by NC leaders



Correlation among three pairs of items was significant at the 0.05 level and indicated moderate direct correlation. Table 39 provides correlation data for Q26.

Table 39

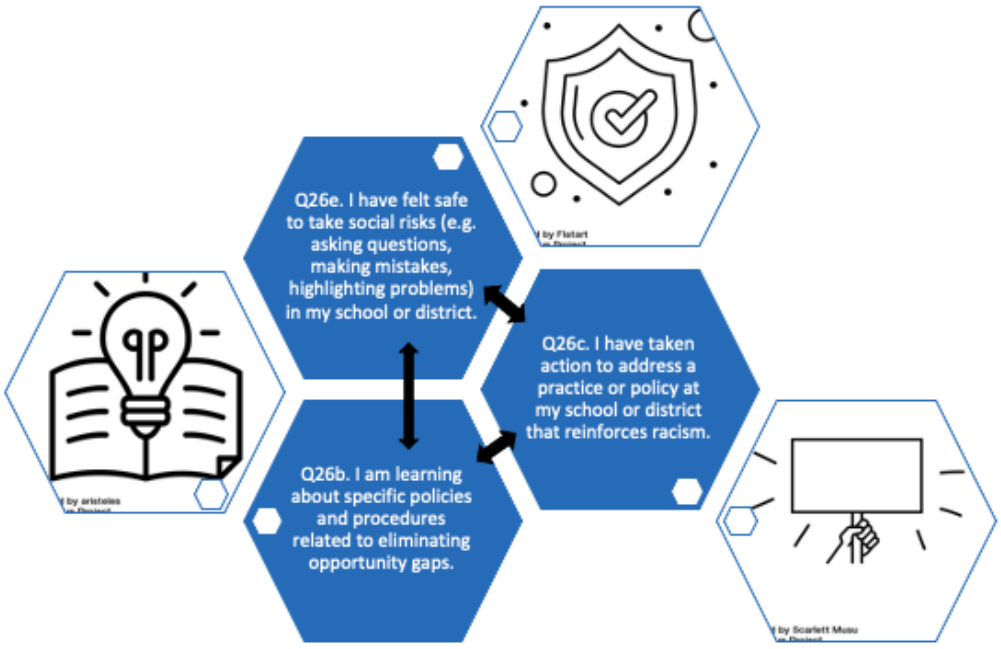
Spearman's Rho Correlations (Q26)

		a. Transformation	b. Transformation	c. Transformation	d. Transformation	e. Transformation
a. Transformation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.346	.186	.312	.266
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.106	.395	.147	.219
	n	23	23	23	23	23
b. Transformation	Correlation Coefficient	.346	1.000	.485*	.325	.503*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.106	.	.019	.130	.014
	n	23	23	23	23	23
c. Transformation	Correlation Coefficient	.186	.485*	1.000	.396	.524*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.395	.019	.	.062	.010
	n	23	23	23	23	23
d. Transformation	Correlation Coefficient	.312	.325	.396	1.000	.303
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.147	.130	.062	.	.159
	n	23	23	23	23	23
e. Transformation	Correlation Coefficient	.266	.503*	.524*	.303	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.219	.014	.010	.159	.
	n	23	23	23	23	23

Feeling Safe to Learn and to Act. Figure 23 provides a visualization of these significant and direct correlations.

Figure 23

Significant and Correlated Relationships in Q26



Significant and direct correlations under Q26 have to do with feeling safe to take risks, learning about ways to address racial inequities and acting to policy address racism. Meaning, the NC leader learning about policies and practices in relation to addressing inequities is also likely to take action to address racist policies and practices and vice versa. The leader learning about policies addressing racial inequities is likely to feel safe taking social risks in their school or district or conversely the leader who feels safe is likely to learn. Finally, and with the highest correlation, a leader who feels safe to take social risks at their school or district is likely to address racist practices or policies (and vice versa).

Quantitative Findings and Discussion for Research Question 1 and 3

Survey Sections Q19, Q21, Q22, Q23, and Q24 provided insight to Research Question 1, which asked, *What dispositional factors appear as barriers or facilitators to administrators in*

LP schools in N.C.? To what extent are the dispositional factors racialized? In answering Research Question 1, parts of Research Question 3 were answered as well. Research Question 3 asked, *What themes emerge from listening to the voices of leaders of LP schools that relate to dispositional and systemic factors?*

Multiple correlations existed within individual subscales providing insight into the first research question. Connections of note explored within Q19, Q21, Q22, Q23, and Q24 include themes around willingness to change under Q19, deceptive self-perceptions under Q21, Using and acknowledging one's power in Q22, and Conditions for learning in Q23.

Willingness to Change Under Q19. Significant correlations existed across items that measure NC leader's willingness to change. Based on agreement results and correlations, leaders reported believing change can happen in schools, perceiving themselves willing to help with this change, and perceiving themselves as actively working or encouraging change in schools. Change within this subscale was related to student improvement and improving school practices.

Deceptive Self-Perceptions Under Q21. NC leaders perceived themselves as being committed to implementing equitable change for students and families also reported believing in adding sociopolitical context to teaching, being proactive in taking actions for change, and recommending their own school to family and friends. Correlation coefficients decreased when additional factors such as considering others' perspectives and discussing barriers to implement deep equitable change were considered. Although leaders displayed high agreement to statements specific to considering others' perspectives and discussing barriers to change, inconsistency was shown when agreements to these statements were 1.5 to nearly 2 times higher in agreement than they were around the statement "I recommend my school/district/organization to my family and friends" (Q21d). Adults who perceived their school to be implementing deep

and equitable change did not hold the same perception in their students, at least not enough to recommend friends and family. Clearer definitions around deep equitable change may be necessary, and conditions encouraging leaders to recommend their school or district to family and friends may need to be further explored.

When considering results from Q19 and Q21, findings suggested willingness was not enough of a factor to make deep equitable change. Survey respondents highly agreed in their willingness to see improvements and to address deep and equitable change. However, agreements substantially decreased when action was questioned in Q21d, *I recommend my school/district/organization to my family and friends*, and Q21e, *My team routinely discusses barriers to implementing deep equitable change*. Respectively, agreements for Q21d and Q21e were 52.2% and 73.9%. Yet, Q21a—*I am motivated to consider other perspectives*—was 95.6% agreement and all Q19 items indicated 87.0% agreement (*I believe that current school practices can be improved*; *I encourage and support changes in school/district/organizational practices to improve student learning*; *I am willing to try new strategies and school/district/organization protocols*; and *I work cooperatively with leadership (at all levels) to make appropriate changes in the school*).

Racialized Dispositions. Regarding the extent to which these dispositions were racialized, I looked at data from the Racial Equity Report Card (RERCs) developed by the Southern Coalition for Racial Justice (SCRJ). SCRJ was founded in 2007 in Durham, NC and provides key sets of data to provide a snapshot of the school-to-prison pipeline across the state and within school districts. One key data point in SCRJ's RERCs is the racial breakdown of teachers and students by state. SCRJ offers transparency by way of contact information, address, team information, specialization, and breakdown. RERCs were created using public data on each

of the state's school districts. The percentage of teachers and percentage of students within three racial demographics: White, Black, and other.

Data collected for the school years ranging from 2018–2019 to 2021–2022 were analyzed to discern trends. Figure 24 offers a longitudinal depiction highlighting racial disparities between the teacher and student populations, using percentages as delineated in the RERCs. Figure 25 delves into the specifics of these disparities for the 2021–2022 academic year. The trend depicted in Figure 24 suggests a consistent racial gap between student and teacher demographics in NC over the last 3 years. For example, White teachers comprised 79% of the total teaching force in NC during the 2021–2022 academic year, but White students only made up 45% of the student population. This number equates to an increase in 34 percentage points difference between the two groups. Conversely, the data displayed a gap of -8 percentage points between Black teachers and students and a -24 percentage point difference between teachers and students of other racial backgrounds. Further corroborating these disparities were data from the National Teaching and Principal Survey by the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics. The data revealed, during the 2017–2018 school year, 69.1% of NC public school principals identified as White and 24.4% as Black, with none identifying as Hispanic. This further underscores the overrepresentation of White educators in NC educational institutions.

Figure 24

Visual of 2019–2022 Racial Gaps Between Teachers and Students in NC Schools

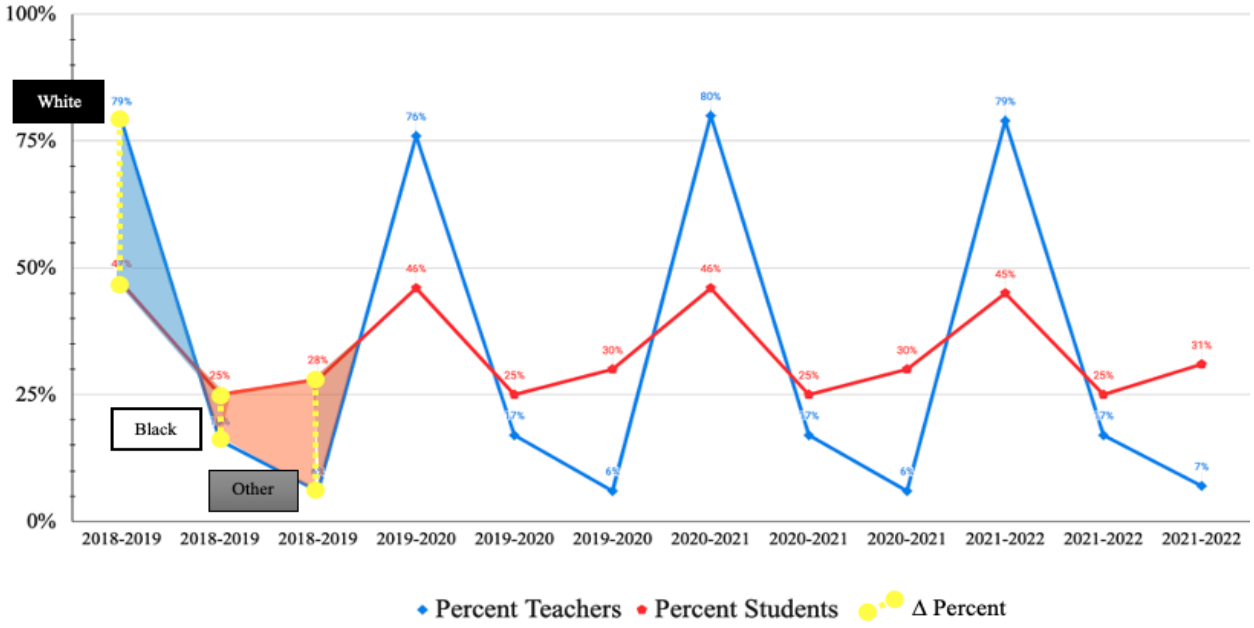
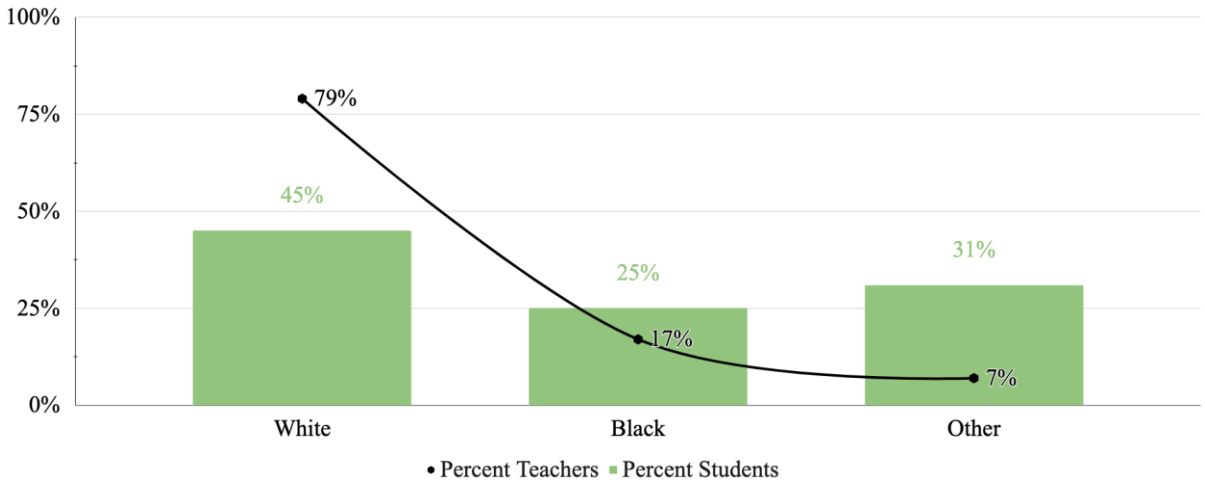


Figure 25

2021–2022 Racial Gaps Between Teachers and Students in NC Schools



In seeking to address racialized dispositions, I re-charted the agreement gap within Subscale Q21 (Dedication to equitable change) by race, focusing on Item Q21d (see Table 40).

Table 40

Agreement Percentages by Race of Item Q21d

Race	Strongly disagree	disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Asian, Other	100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Black or African American	0.0	13.3	26.7	33.3	26.7
Black or African American, Asian	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0
White or Caucasian	16.7	16.7	33.3	16.7	16.7

The findings suggested 33% of White NC school leaders agreed or strongly agreed with Q21d. Alternatively nearly 60% of NC school leaders who identified as Black or African American responded similarly. This finding brings to light a concerning pattern that NC not only has a racial disparity in representation within school systems, it also has a disparity in advocacy and in sentiment. In being overrepresented across school systems in NC, White educators and leaders carry more decision-making power within NC schools. Yet, the sentiment of White leaders in NC schools appears to be more negative toward their schools than Black leaders.

Using and Acknowledging One's Power in Q22. Statements Q22d and Q22e within the subscale for power distribution had a 0.585 correlation significant at the 0.01 level. These results indicate school leaders who perceived themselves as being able to influence people (e.g., staff, community members, local businesses) to participate in equitable practices were likely to speak to an individual if they observed an overt racist encounter at their school. The converse, leaders who reported speaking with individuals they have observed to have displayed overt or covert racist acts were leaders who perceived themselves to be influential, was also true. This suggests influence and action toward change share a relationship.

Action and Influence by Race. Table 41 provides the response agreement of survey participants by race. White NC school leaders agree less than Black NC school leaders on the statement in Q22d.

Table 41

Agreement Percentages by Race of Item Q22d

Race	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Asian, Other, Prefer not to say	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	0.0
Black or African American	0.0	6.7	6.7	60.0	26.7
Black or African American, Asian	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0
White or Caucasian	0.0	16.7	0.0	50.0	33.3

In applying this relationship between perceived influence and the propensity for responsive action (or the inverse) across the larger NC population, an important finding emerged. Despite constituting a significant proportion of leaders and teachers, White school leaders in North Carolina perceived their influence to be diminished. Although they constituted a significant proportion of leaders and teachers, White school administrators in NC perceived themselves as having a reduced influence when compared to Black school leaders. Following the relationship between Q22d and Q22e, White NC leaders were therefore less likely to act when they observed an injustice in the form of overt or covert racist behavior in their schools. Such passivity, whether conscious or unconscious, can be perceived by stakeholders as an endorsement to these overt or covert racist acts.

Conditions for Learning in Q23. With a 0.705 correlation coefficient significant at the 0.01 level, NC leaders who agreed with the statement, *I involve a diverse representation of staff and students in making decisions in areas like hiring, instructional initiatives, school*

improvement goals, etc., likely also agreed with the statement, *I use different ways to develop a strong relationship among all staff and students*. Leaders with dispositions leading toward the democratization of schooling are leaders who share power, hope, and the fruits of society (Shields, 2020). Additionally, they are leaders who restore the voices of teachers, parents, and students, and they offer a space where students can learn freely (Shields, 2018), and more.

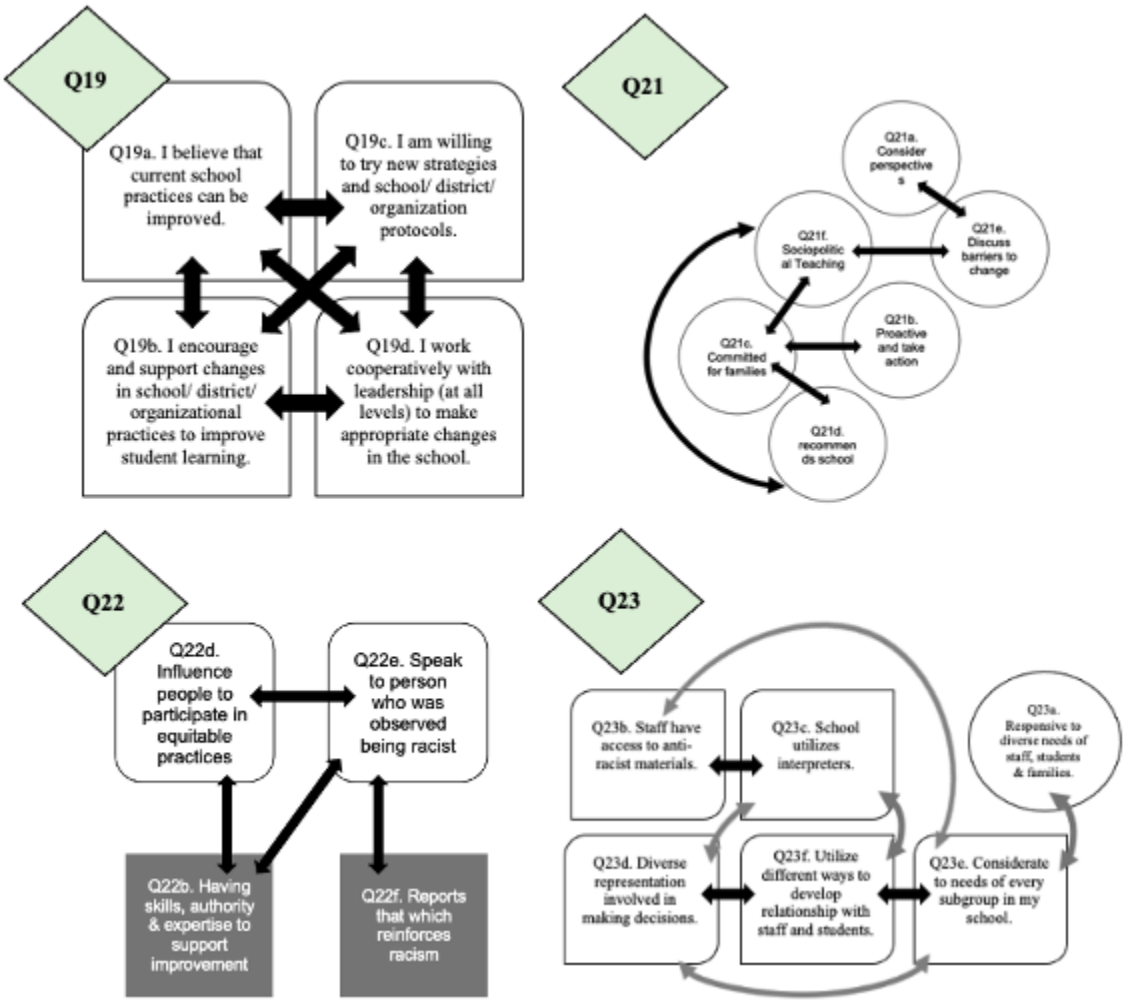
Findings under Q23 indicated NC leaders who involved a diversity of representation to make key decisions in staff, instruction, and planning for improvement in their schools, were also likely to use different ways for staff and students to develop strong relationships. Though other, albeit weaker, correlations existed under Q23, greater than 90% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed with statements under Item Q23d (91.3%) and Item Q23f (95.7%). These same leaders who appeared to prioritize relationship building among teachers and students (Q23f) were also likely to agree (0.529 correlation coefficient) with the statement, *I am considerate to the needs of every subgroup in my school, at the exclusion of no group* (Q23e). Agreement for Q23e (82.6%) dropped by approximately 10 percentage points from agreements for Items Q23d and Q23f. So, relationships may be prioritized by nearly all (96%) of NC leaders, but approximately 83% considered the needs of every subgroup.

Summary. Correlations under Q19, Q21, Q22, and Q23 offered four findings. The first was many NC school leaders perceived themselves as exceedingly willing (with nearly 90% agreement) to implement change. Second, self-perceptions of dedication to equity were inflated among NC school leaders. Additionally, school sentiment was racialized. Third, influence was connected to action and White NC school leaders did not perceive themselves as having influence. Lastly, NC school leaders who prioritized and practiced involving a diverse representation in decision-making processes were also likely to employ diverse strategies to

build strong relationships among staff and students. These leaders perceived themselves as considerate of the needs of every subgroup in their schools. Figure 26 provides a visualization of the relationships for subscales exploring a research question on dispositions of NC school leaders.

Figure 26

Visualization of Relationships for Subscales (Q19, Q21, Q22, and Q23)



Quantitative Findings and Discussion for Research Question 2 and 3

Survey sections Q20, Q25, and Q26 provided insight to Research Question 2, which asked, *What systemic factors appear as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in N.C.? To what extent are these systemic factors racialized?* In answering Research Question 2, parts of Research Question 3 are answered as well. Research Question 3 asked, *What themes emerge from listening to the voices of leaders of LP schools that relate to dispositional and systemic factors?*

Systemic factors are stubborn disparities (Locke & Getachew, 2019), which often materialize themselves in educational achievement across student subgroups. They are typically impacted by circumstances external to the classroom. Such circumstances relate to access (i.e., academic, affective, or material) and scarcity specific to sociopolitical or socioeconomic differences (Lipsitz, 1998; Locke, 2017; Shapiro, 2014; Steele, 2011; Theoharis, 2007). Persistent patterns of racism contribute to systemic disparities (Locke & Getachew, 2019) manifested in education (Scheetz & Senge, 2016). The pervasiveness of racism in U.S. education also aligns with critical race theory (CRT; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997). The quantitative phase of this research explored systemic factors related to access of educational supports and racism and described within Subscales Q20, Q25, and Q26.

Staffing, Budget, and School Environment in Q20. Q20c, *I have the necessary support in terms of facilities*, carried the lowest agreement percentage (47.8%) within Subscale Q20. Q20c shared its strongest correlation coefficient (0.673) with Q20d, *I have the necessary support in terms of staffing*, followed by its correlation with Q20a, *I have the necessary support in terms of budget or financial resources*, at 0.620. Suggesting though less than half of NC school leaders

believed they have the support they need in terms of the physical school environment, this perception directly correlated to perceived staffing or budget support.

Race Is White and Black in Q25. Q25, the subscale tagged for pervasiveness of racism—*the lighter your skin color, the less prejudice and discrimination you experience*—carried the lowest agreement percentage (56.5%). Q20f correlated with Q20e, *White cultural characteristics are more valued than those of people of color*, the strongest with a coefficient of 0.714. Other items under this subscale more directly addressed Whiteness rather than lightness. Items mentioned White, Whiteness, or White cultural characteristics, and each reached agreement levels above 80%. This suggests for leaders in NC, race is binary.

Learning and Acting When Feeling Safe in Q26. The key finding for this subscale was the more significant and direct correlations under Q26 have to do with feeling safe to take risks, learning about ways to address racial inequities and acting to policy address racism.

Summary. Systemic factors acting as barriers to change included prejudice and privilege. Factors acting as facilitators to change included district or community support in areas such as finance, staffing, and the school environment.

Overall Quantitative Findings

Inter-Subscale Correlations Findings Across Research Questions 1–3. Significant correlations for most subscales in this survey included significance at the 0.01 level with some exceptions: Q24 about capability indicated there was no significance nor do the items approach significance and Q26 about racialized school transformation was the only category whose subscale does not include items with significance at the 0.01 level.

Significant and greater than 0.7 coefficient correlation items indicated correlations were strongest among Q19a–Q19b, Q19a–Q19c, Q19a–Q19d, Q19c–Q19b, Q19a–Q19d, Q23d–Q23f,

Q25c–Q25e, and Q25e–Q25f. Table 42 offers a table of all correlation coefficients across these nine pairs of items. There was significant and moderate or greater than 0.6 correlation across items Q19c on willingness and Q25e on the pervasiveness of racism. There was significant and moderate or greater than 0.5 correlation across items Q19a on willingness and Q25e on the pervasiveness of racism; and, across items Q19b on willingness and Q25e on the pervasiveness of racism. The NC leaders agreeing with the statement, *I believe that current school practices can be improved*; the statement, *I encourage and support changes in school/ district/ organizational practices to improve student learning*; or the statement, *I am willing to try new strategies and school/district/organization protocols*, were likely to agree with the statement, *White cultural characteristics are more valued than those of people of color*.

Table 42

Spearman's Rho Correlations Among Significant and Correlated Items

		a. Will	b. Will	c. Will	d. Will	d. Dem. School	f. Dem. School	c. PoR	e. PoR	f. PoR
a. Will	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.729**	.890**	.778**	.291	.427*	.431*	.572**	.435*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<.001	<.001	<.001	.179	.042	.040	.004	.038
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
b. Will	Correlation Coefficient	.729**	1.000	.864**	.629**	.284	.346	.267	.565**	.425*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.	<.001	.001	.189	.106	.218	.005	.043
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
c. Will	Correlation Coefficient	.890**	.864**	1.000	.688**	.335	.414*	.368	.620**	.466*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	.	<.001	.119	.050	.084	.002	.025
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
d. Will	Correlation Coefficient	.778**	.629**	.688**	1.000	.175	.172	.282	.285	.287
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.001	<.001	.	.426	.434	.193	.187	.185
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
	Correlation Coefficient	.291	.284	.335	.175	1.000	.705**	.308	.251	-.059

d. Dem school	Sig. (2-tailed)	.179	.189	.119	.426	.	<.001	.152	.247	.789
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
f. Dem school	Correlation Coefficient	.427*	.346	.414*	.172	.705**	1.000	.177	.274	-.209
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.042	.106	.050	.434	<.001	.	.420	.206	.339
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
c. PoR	Correlation Coefficient	.431*	.267	.368	.282	.308	.177	1.000	.781**	.517*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.040	.218	.084	.193	.152	.420	.	<.001	.011
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
e. PoR	Correlation Coefficient	.572**	.565**	.620**	.285	.251	.274	.781**	1.000	.714**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.005	.002	.187	.247	.206	<.001	.	<.001
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23
f. PoR	Correlation Coefficient	.435*	.425*	.466*	.287	-.059	-.209	.517*	.714**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.038	.043	.025	.185	.789	.339	.011	<.001	.
	N	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23	23

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

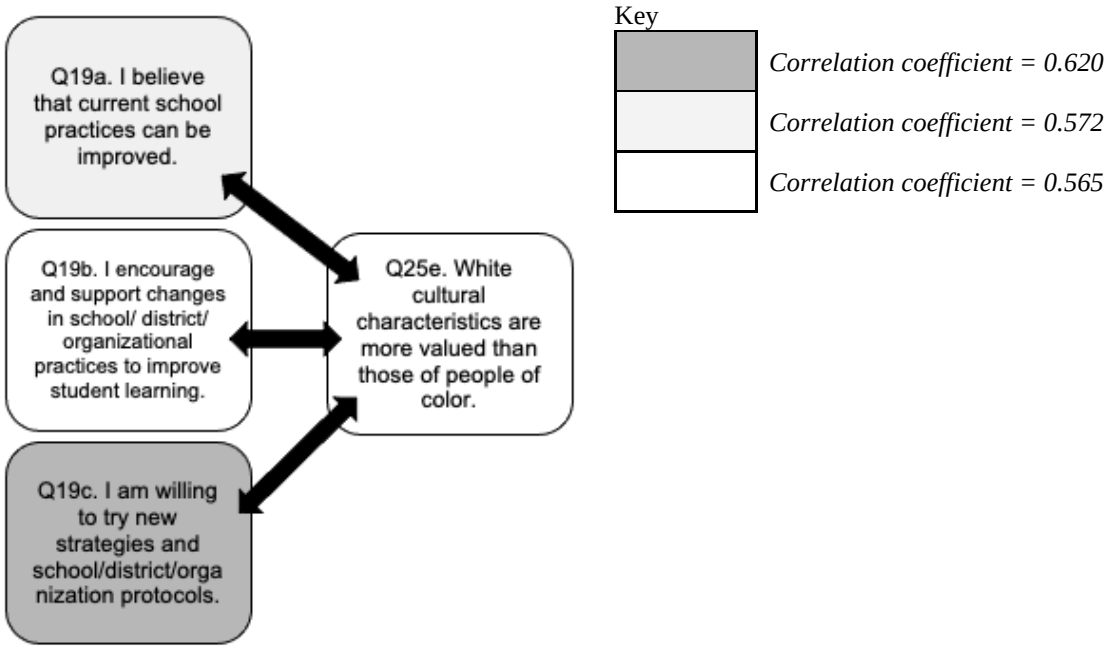
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

From the overall list of significant and greater than 0.7 coefficient correlation items within their own subscale, those that held moderate (greater than 0.5) correlations significant at the 0.01 or 0.05 levels outside of their respective subscale are displayed in Figure 27. These results support a conclusion there exists a direct relationship between willingness to change and racial awareness, or simply stated, willingness is racialized. Additionally, the presence of correlation coefficients between the values 0.4 and 0.5 suggests a weak and direct correlation between willingness and democratic schooling. A direct or positive correlation in this research was a correlation in which large agreements or frequencies of one variable were associated with large agreements or frequencies of the other. The same was true from small-to-small values. Thus, the more willing a leader is for change, the moderately likely the leader is aware of race

relations in U.S. education, and a weak likeliness the leader may display aspects of Shield's (2018, 2020) dispositional tenet on emancipation, democracy, inclusion, equity.

Figure 27

Significant Inter Subscales with Correlation Coefficients Greater Than 0.5



As Table 42 shows, other weak—approaching 0.5—correlations significant at the 0.01 or 0.05 levels outside of their respective subscale were discovered from the overall list of significant and were greater than 0.7 coefficient correlation items within their own subscale. These relationships were with items within Q19, willingness, and Q25, pervasiveness of racism, as well, but also among items within Q19, willingness, and Q23, the democratization of schooling. Correlation coefficients between 0.4 and 0.5 significant at the 0.05 level for inter-subscale items holding a significant and moderate to high correlation within their own subscales included:

- Q19a, *I believe that current school practices can be improved*, with Q23f, *I use different ways to develop a strong relationship among all staff and students.*
- Q19a, *I believe that current school practices can be improved*, with Q25c, *Being White and having an advantage go hand in hand*.
- Q19a, *I believe that current school practices can be improved*, with Q25f, *The lighter your skin color, the less prejudice and discrimination you experience*.
- Q19b, *I encourage and support changes in school/district/organizational practices to improve student learning*, with Q25f, *The lighter your skin color, the less prejudice and discrimination you experience*.
- Q19c, *I am willing to try new strategies and school/district/organization protocols*, with Q23f, *I use different ways to develop a strong relationship among all staff and students*.
- Q19c, *I am willing to try new strategies and school/district/organization protocols*, with Q25f, *The lighter your skin color, the less prejudice and discrimination you experience.*

Albeit weak, there was a relationship between dispositional factors (specific to components within four of the eight TLT tenets) and cultural and possibly racial awareness. Inter-subscale correlations connecting willingness and the democratization of schooling to factors surrounding race appeared to validate a hypothesis that dispositions of NC school leaders are racialized. Furthermore, correlations in and across subscales suggested the most pervasive disposition among NC leaders was weakly linked to characteristics pertaining to arguing for democracy in schooling. More strongly associated among NC school leaders was a general willingness for change.

Quantitative Phase Summary

The quantitative phase used a survey providing some insight into each of the research questions. Findings for Research Question 1 regarding dispositional factors appeared as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in NC, and the extent to which the dispositional factors racialized were offered by results found using Q19, Q21, Q22, Q23, and Q24. Findings for Research Question 2 on the systemic factors appeared as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in NC, and the extent to which the dispositional factors racialized were offered by results found within Q20, Q25, and Q26. Some findings regarding Research Question 3 on the themes that emerged from listening to the voices of leaders of LP schools that related to dispositional and systemic factors were gleaned from the survey. Table 43 provides alignment between subscale and research question and research question component and theory. Subscales aligned to Research Question 1 typically aligned more closely to TLT, and subscales aligned to Research Question 2 typically aligned more closely to CRT.

Table 43

Subscale and Research Question Alignment Tool

Research question alignment	Subscale	Research question component	Research question subcomponent	Theory alignment
Research Question 1 and Research Question 2	SQ19 As an educational leader	Willingness	One's desire to change in the pursuit for social justice	TLT and CRT
	SQ21 To what extent do you agree	Attitudinal presence Dedicated to equitable change	Aligned to the "mandate for equity" domain of TLT	TLT
	SQ22 To what extent do you agree	Attitudinal presence Addressing inequitable distributions of	Aligned to the "redistribution of power" domain of TLT	TLT

Research question alignment	Subscale	Research question component	Research question subcomponent	Theory alignment
		power		
	SQ23 To what extent do you agree	Attitudinal presence Arguing for democracy through voice	Aligned to the "emancipation, democracy, inclusion, equity" domain of TLT	TLT
	SQ24 To what extent do you agree	Attitudinal presence Finding balance and affecting change	Aligned to the "balance critique & promise" domain of TLT	TLT
		Capability (use of moral resources)		TLT
Research Question 2 and Research Question 3	SQ20 In general in my school when there is agreement that change needs to happen	Educational supports (both affective and material)	● Affective opportunity for positive student-adult connection, safety ● Material student literature or curriculum	CRT
		Resource allocation	Access to funds	
	SQ25 To what extent do you agree	Persistence of racism as a norm	Endemicity of racism within to the fabric of US society	CRT
	SQ26 How often have you completed the following behaviors in the last 12 months?	● The presence and persistence of racism ● Attitudinal presence Finding balance and affecting change (through action)	Frequency of action and systemicity of factors.	TLT and CRT

Various reliable instruments were used to create this research's survey. Of eight subscales, seven indicated acceptable to high internal reliability, and one subscale (Q24) was rejected. Table 44 provides a breakdown of the surveys and subscales or categories from which items for this survey derive. Primary surveys used included ORCA, ORIC, SLPQ, ARC, and CCSAQ.

Table 44

Breakdown of the Survey Items, Subscales or Categories

Question	Subscale domain	Original survey	Original subscale
Q19	Willingness	Readiness to Change Assessment (ORCA)	Opinion Leaders
Q20	Educational Supports (including funding)	Readiness to Change Assessment (ORCA)	General Resources
Q21	Dedication to equitable change	Organizational Readiness for Implementing Change (ORIC); School Heads' Leadership Practices (SLPQ); Educators Scale of Student Diversity (ESSD); Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Questionnaire (CCSAQ)	Readiness; Commitment; Culturally Responsive Instruction; Staffing
dQ22	Distributions of power	NC Statute § 115C-105.27; Workplace Readiness Questionnaire; MGH DoM Anti-RaCism (ARC) Assessment	School improvement; Readiness for change - Change efficacy; Bystander Intervention
Q23	Democratization of schooling	School Heads' Leadership Practices (SLPQ); Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Questionnaire (CCSAQ)	Commitment; Resources; Establishing effective functional teams
Q24	Capability (finding balance)	Organizational Readiness for Implementing Change (ORIC); School Heads' Leadership Practices (SLPQ)	Readiness; Establishing effective functional teams
Q25	Pervasiveness of Racism	MGH DoM Anti-RaCism (ARC) Assessment (originating from "privilege and oppression inventory"); Cultural Competence Self-assessment	Racism in society (originating from "White privilege awareness"); Knowledge

Question	Subscale domain	Original survey	Original subscale
Q26	Racialized school transformation (action-driven)	MGH DoM Anti-RaCism (ARC) Assessment; Cultural Competence Self-assessment; Dedication to equitable change description	Bystander Intervention; Skills; Mandate for change

The 40-item survey had consistent internal reliability with Cronbach's alpha of 0.925. In removing item Q26f due to permission of use, the 39-item survey had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.926. When removing Q24, the subscale for capability, the 37-item survey had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.923. This suggests although Q24 did not hold internal reliability when placed as an independent subscale, it positively contributed to the overall internal consistency of the survey.

Summary. Inter-subscale revealed three findings corresponding to Research Questions 1 through 3. First, a leader willing to make change has an awareness of culture, race, and racism. The extent of awareness was not revealed in the survey results. Second, a leader dedicated to change holds less negative sentiment about their diverse schools than a leader who is not. What negative sentiment may consist of was not revealed in the survey results. Lastly, the perception of diminished influence among White NC leaders may contribute to a reticence to address observed overt and covert racial prejudices in schools.

CHAPTER 4.2

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

There were three components to the qualitative phase. These included a document analysis and two forms of interviews. Interviews consisted of elicitation interviews with school leaders and semistructured interviews or narratives of graduates of North Carolina (NC) public schools. Each component of the qualitative phase was supported with historical data of schools using public data.

Document Analysis

In addition to survey results, I used text mining to quantify document findings and to chart percentages and frequencies over time. To rigorously investigate power, leadership, decision making, State Board of Education meeting minutes were analyzed. Eleven types of meetings are published on the NC Department of Public Instruction site for SBE meeting agendas or minutes: NC State Board of Education Meetings, *NC State Board of Education Meetings - Executive Committee, American Rescue Plan Committee of Practitioners, Education and Workforce Innovation Commission, Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission, NC Charter Schools Advisory Board Meetings, NC Driver Education Advisory Committee, NC Every Student Succeeds Act Committee of Practitioners, NC Professional Educator Preparation and Standards Commission, NC State Board of Education Literacy Instruction and Teacher Preparation Task Force, and Whole Child NC Committee. Of the 642 state meetings documented since 2016, meeting minutes are visible beginning in 2018. I analyzed NC State Board of Education Meetings minutes from 217 meetings between 2018 and August of 2023 as shown in Table 45. I also analyzed all subsequent attachments within posted minutes in NVivo using

queries for word frequencies and within the state's executive board for specific word searches using the platform's filter and search features.

Table 45

Frequency of NC State Board Meetings

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Frequency	36	41	43	37	33	27

Utterances of Racism

In using critical race theory (CRT) as a foundational theory for this research, I investigated the words racism, CRT, and critical race. Results from these searches referred to mentions or incidents of utterance specific to the word of phrase in question. Within 217 meeting minutes, 104 meeting minutes—or 47.9%—of all NC SBE meetings between January 2018 and June 2023 included utterances of racism. Within the 104 SBE meeting minutes (either within the minutes themselves or within documents presented during meetings), there were 458 utterances or documentations of the word racism; 74.04% or 77 (n = 104) of the minutes included documents attached and presented with at least one instance of the word racism documented.

When totaled, these 77 attachments or documents amounted to 13,675 pages. I searched and reviewed each document. Thus, with 458 utterances of racism across 13,675 pages, the word racism made up 3.35% of SBE text within 104 meeting minutes since 2018. With 458 utterances across 104 meetings, the word racism was uttered or documented an average of 4.4 times per meeting. Some meetings included multiple documents, and some documents were reviewed on multiple occasions as such inflate the count of both pages and utterances. Because the frequency

of utterance corresponds to the number of pages, it is assumed 3.35% mentions of racism across 104 SBE meetings is an accurate percent.

Documents presented during meetings or attached to meeting minutes included items such as evaluations of schools, teacher preparation policy and guidelines, district applications for reform, resolutions for equity by the SBE, or the NC Standard Course of Study determining state standards for all levels of schooling in all subjects. The overarching SBE meeting topics with utterances or racism between January 2018 and June 2023 included Charter Schools, Educator Preparation Program, SBE minute notes, NC content standards, External Presentation to SBE, SBE Member Comment, SBE Strategic Planning, Internal Reporting to SBE, American Indian Education, Closed Session, Learning Recovery, American Rescue Plan, Candidate Review, and Legislative Updates.

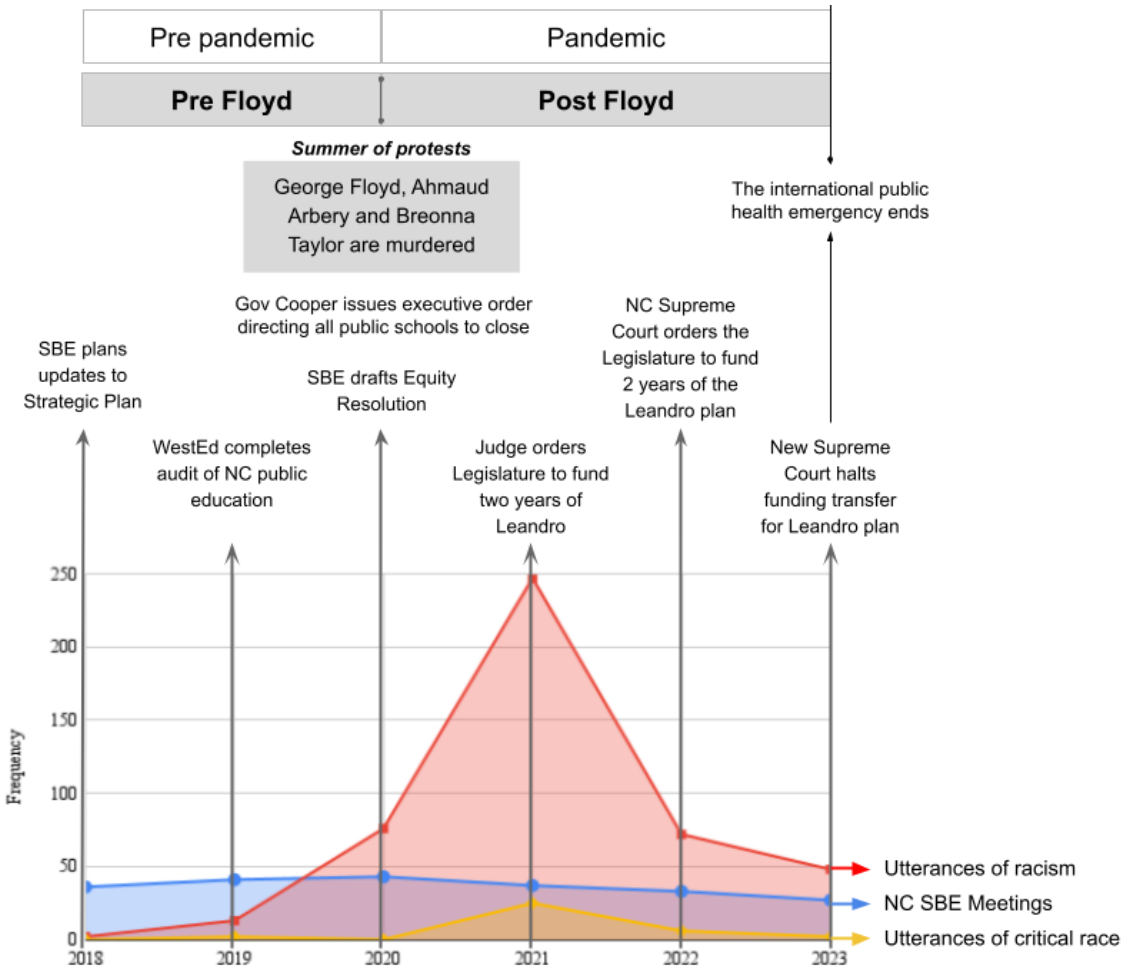
Racism utterances began increasing after the report from WestEd, an external vendor, provided an action plan to the presiding judge on *Leandro* regarding NC's education system and its ability to provide all students with sound and basic education. Utterances continued to increase in 2020, the year Governor Cooper closed schools in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic (March 2020), when the nation witnessed the 8 minute and 46 second suffocation and subsequent murder of George Floyd by a police officer (May 2020), and when the SBE updated its Resolution on Equity (July to October; see Figure 28). On June 3, 2020, the SBE said his name, George Floyd, and remarked:

> Chairman Davis began his comments by saying the name 'George Floyd,' . . . [He] noted that anything less than acknowledging Mr. Floyd's name would only add to the comfortable silence that surrounds and upholds the systemic practices of racism that have plagued our country. He went on to add that this death and the pandemic have revealed

with clarity the vastness of inequities in our society and the underlying racism that sustains such beliefs and behaviors. (2020, p. 2)

Figure 28

Utterances of Racism Within SBE Meeting Minutes Over Time

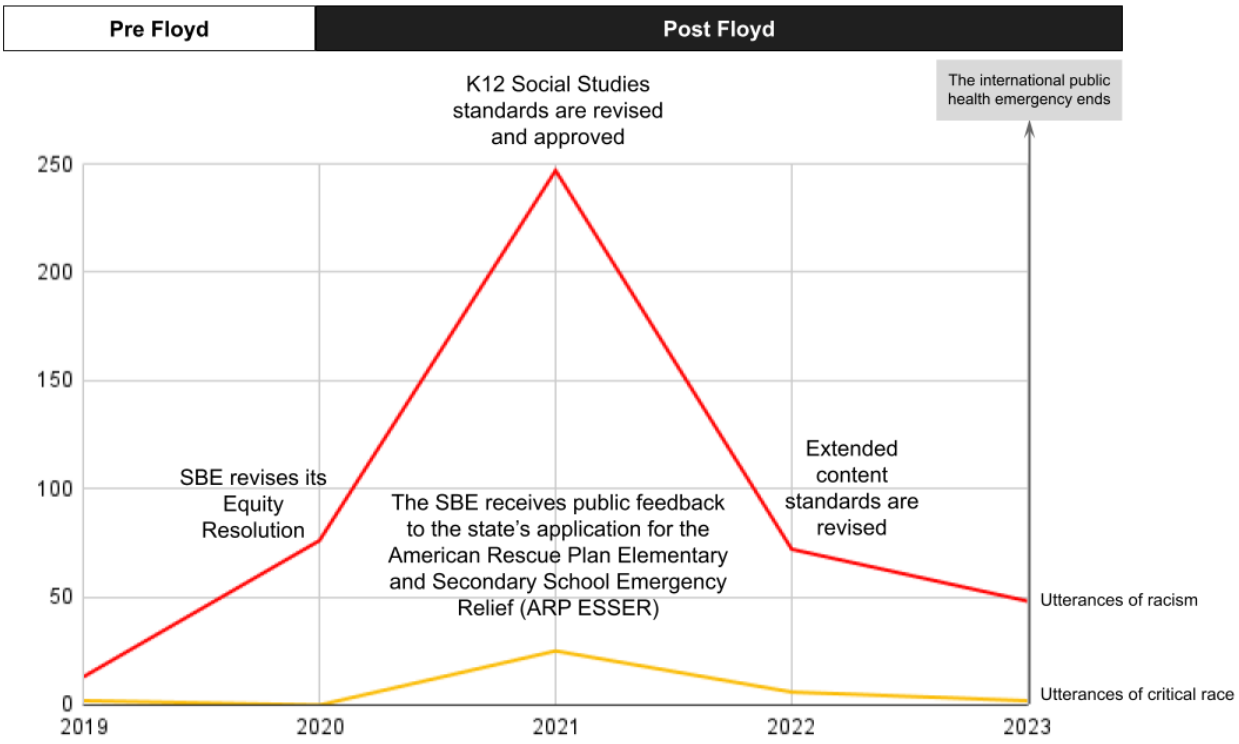


Leadership Dispositions at the State Level. Increases in utterances of racism in the recent years coupled with key events in NC and SBE meeting topics suggests the existence of internal struggle among state leadership in their pursuit to address issues of race and racism in

education. Figure 29 offers a closer look at the frequency of utterances or racism and critical race over time and highlights key revisions and adoptions faced by the SBE during peak years of utterances.

Figure 29

Utterances and Their Influences



For example, on February 4, 2021, the NC SBE approved new content standards for social studies in K–12. The standards were approved after a fifth draft and upon the removal from the word *systemic* alongside racism and discrimination, as well as the removal of the word *identify* from gender. The final discussion and adoption of the NC K–12 social studies standards was conducted between January and February of 2021. Between the January 27th and February 3rd meeting discussions and the final adoption of K–12 social studies standards on February 4th,

a total of 29 utterances of racism by meeting members or within documents presented in the SBE meetings were made. At the time, there were zero utterances of critical race or similar words (CRT specific to critical race theory or critical race theory altogether) during SBE meeting minutes in 2021.

Figure 30 offers a frequency of utterances of racism by month during the utterance from 2020 to 2022 and Figure 29 provides overlapping years of utterances (also see Appendix E). Immediately following the death of George Floyd, efforts to address inequities and racism across the state impacted the state's adoption efforts of social studies content standards. June 2021 and November 2021 were marked by increased instances of racism documented in SBE minutes. June 2021 utterances were primarily in relation to the review of social studies standards and educational resources, as well as to NC ACCESS recommendations.

Figure 30

Monthly Frequency of Utterances of Racism in 2020–2022

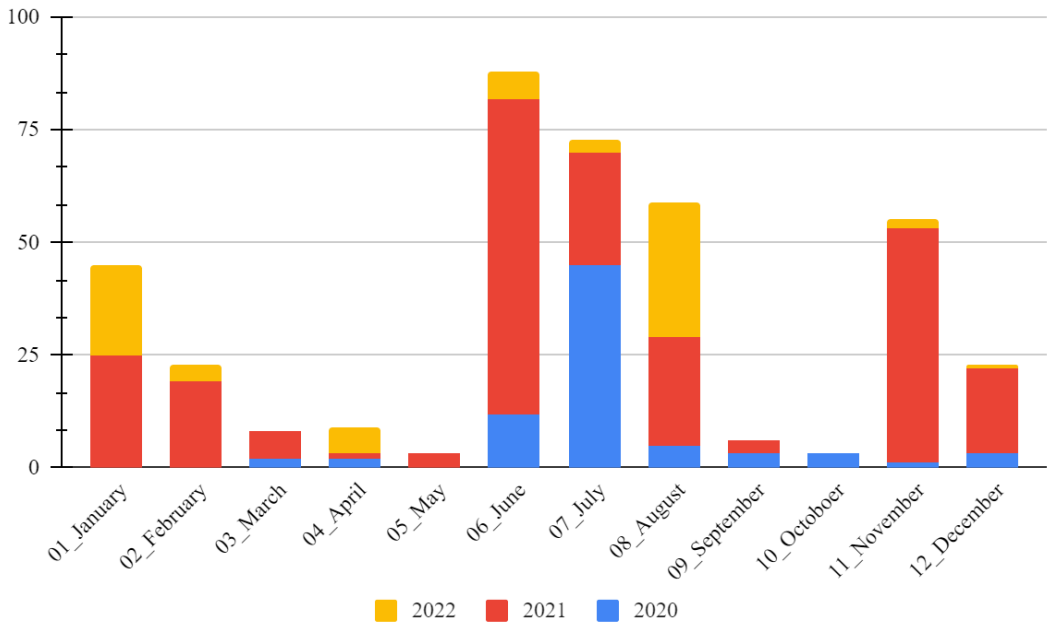


Table 46 provides examples of the varying comments documented in SBE meeting minutes on January 27 and February 3, 2021. For example, Lt. Gov. Robinson stated his dislike for the "tone" of the standards and its "leftist" agenda. Alternatively, board member Ford attempted to redirect comments like those of Lt. Gov. Robinson by highlighting the more positive feedback received from the public about the social studies standards.

Table 46

Sample Comments from SBE Meeting Minutes

Example type	Date	Speaker	Comment
Examples of final SBE comments prior to the official adoption of K–12 Social Studies	Feb 3, 2021	Mrs. C	"Students in NC public schools study history throughout the entirety of their public-school experience. While the public at large might not agree as to why it is important that students learn geography, civics, and history, the NC SBE believes that **our collective social studies standards must reflect the nation's diversity and that the successes, contributions, and struggles of multiple groups and individuals should be included.** This means teaching the hard truths of Native American oppression, anti-Catholicism, exploitation of child labor, and Jim Crow . . . while simultaneously teaching that the US Const. created the world's first organized democracy since ancient Rome and that . . . Pres. Lincoln ended the US' participation in what had been more than 9,000 years of legalized slavery and human bondage in most parts of the world."
		Mr. MB-S	"MB-S shared a multifaceted compliment towards the **civil and calm manner in which the SBE and NCDPI leaders are approaching matters related to adopting SS Standards**."
		Vice Chair AD	"AD praised the way **Board Members have upheld respect and admiration for one-another through the difficult but much needed discussion** relating to historical inflictions experienced in our country . . . [The] SBE and NCDPI must . . . stay in unison . . . "

Example type	Date	Speaker	Comment
Examples of K–12 Social Studies discussion by the SBE during a meeting	Jan 27, 2021	Ms. C	"Ms. C ensured that Draft 4 versus Draft 5 changes were related to **refinement of terminology pertaining to systemic racism to be written as racism only, gender identity to be written as identity only, and systemic discrimination to be written as discrimination only** which has been revised, modification of explicit language found in the glossary was changed throughout the document relating to those terms as well."
		Lt. Gov. MR	"Lt Governor stated that **draft 5 continues to be divisive, political, and leftist motivated without a focus of educating students**, specifically elementary students who are just beginning learners."
		Dr. S	"Dr. S **verified that there is no mention of the words** systemic nor gender in the document for elementary education."
		Supt. CT	"Superintendent CT **agrees with the removal of the term systemic in relation to racism or discrimination and gender in relation to identity**. She recited evidence of how the terms racism and identity can be used in multiple ways."
		Mr. C	"Mr. C **recognized the challenge is to teach students the good and bad aspects of historical occurrences**."
		Mr. JF	"Mr. JF, recognizing that **the approval process for SS standards has been completely challenging**, highlighted the positive mentions from the feedback survey and the helpfulness of the provided definitions in the document's glossary."
		Ms. AW	"Ms. AW highlighted that the **Social Studies standards should highlight the greatness of NC and the US**. She stated the standards should detail national economics overcoming poverty, affluence of equality and mobility of the American economic system."

Balancing Critique and Promise. Some comments, including from board member Camnitz, uplifted the standards' need to "reflect the nation's diversity . . . successes, contributions, and struggles" while simultaneously downplaying the country's responsibility in its participation in slavery by referring to it as an end to "more than 9,000 years of legalized slavery and human bondage in most parts of the world" (2021, p. 7). Referencing the country's

participation in the generational enslavement, discrimination, and dehumanization (as evidenced by the 'three fifth's clause' under Article 1, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution that ruled any unfree [i.e., enslaved person], would be counted as three fifths of a free person) of one racial group over another as a global phenomenon, suggests a hesitance by decisionmakers to critique the status quo (specific to Shield's [2018, 2020] tenet of balancing critique and promise). Other leaders like board member White, were more direct in their efforts to maintain ideology rooted in supremacy in her comment "Social Studies standards should highlight the greatness of NC and the US;" thus, ignoring any negative or oppressive historical truths.

Emancipation, Democracy, Inclusion, Equity. Other comments such as the one made by the state's Superintendent Truitt, supported the "refinement of terminology" through the "the removal of the term systemic in relation to racism or discrimination and gender in relation to identity." This comment highlighted the state leadership's unwillingness to offer conditions under which students can learn and develop their own self-identity (specific to Shield's [2018, 2020] tenet of emancipation, democracy, inclusion, equity). This push to remove "explicit language" maintains ambiguity around the topics of racism, discrimination, and gender identity and either intentionally or unintentionally exposes NC leaders' biases around racism, sexism, heterosexism, and gender binarism.

A Struggle to Champion Change. Ultimately, sentiment of these SBE meeting minutes were varied, showcasing a struggle from leadership to embrace educational transformation. Board member opinions shared in the SBE minutes indicated positive and negative sentiment toward change specific to transforming social studies standards in NC. For example, Ford provided same day follow up to the SBE meeting by stating:

> I'm really tired, y'all. I'm tired because I feel like we're not being direct. We're not being honest . . . Now we're using terms like divisive, which is very nebulous . . . It's not clear to me — for whom is this divisive?" (Granados, 2021, para. 14)

Although the standards were approved at the SBE meeting following the January (2023) discussions, this approval was not satisfactory to all leaders, and was a fifth draft to the standard course of study. Additionally, a review of SBE meeting minutes between the February 2021 adoption to June 2023 offered evidence of continued discussion and engagement around the extended social studies content standards and unpacking documents up until February 3, 2022.

I found a sense of struggle or a mixed sense of willingness by NC state leaders throughout SBE meeting minutes during years of peak utterances of racism, suggesting a theme of struggle (whether internally or externally driven). For example, a struggle to champion change was evident during the SBE strategic planning, which led to an update of the SBE Resolution on Equity. The revision and adoption of the SBE Resolution on Equity was conducted over the course of 3 months (from July 2020 to October 2020). For example, on September 2, 2020, board member White shared concerning the resolution. White stated:

> [I am] 90% in support of the resolution with hesitance of supporting a few items verbiage or description within the list lack of access to and supports for teachers of color, the redundancy of gender, lastly, words that are more divisive, intending to cause disagreement or hostility rather than inclusive, including or covering a multitude of services (2020, p. 20).

Board member White stated she shared these concerns because "some of the wording may cause a disconnect from some of the rural counties in the state." This comment provided evidence of a struggle or willingness by some state leaders to argue for democracy. Shields (2018, 2020) stated

a transformative leader's (TL) proclivity to democratize education is evidenced using knowledge of equity to overcome deficit thinking and by the TL's action of taking responsibility for change. This 2020 comment from a board member who was part of the SBE since her 2016 appointment by then Governor Pat McCrory, was but one example of many of NC state leaders' struggles to champion change.

The existence of a struggle to champion change spoke to an overarching theme. A combination of these comments stated during heightened utterances of racism within SBE meeting minutes pointed to an absence of a mandate for change by NC state leaders. A dedication to equitable change was evidenced by TL's unwavering commitment to addressing inequity (Shields, 2018). Though this absence of a mandate for change does not equate to an absence of transformative dispositional characteristics in NC state leaders, it does suggest an absence in the overall leadership's commitment to transformation. Furthermore, and in combination with NC's educational history described in Chapter 2.2, board member White's reference to "the disconnect from some rural counties" also pointed to a resistance to change pushed not only by some state leaders, but also from local public leaders.

Internal Response and External Pressure to Utterances of Critical Race

Due to instances in which utterances of racism exposed utterances of CRT or critical race, I also explored utterances of critical race. Initially I explored CRT, which yielded misleading results in which multiple mentions of CRT were not in reference to critical race or critical race theory. An exploration of utterances of the words "critical" or "race" separately yielded more misleading results. As such the exploration was modified to search for instances or mentions of critical race. SBE meeting minutes or documents within meeting minutes tagged to reference critical race were further scrutinized to search for CRT. There were 12 mentions of

CRT either directly in meeting discussions or supporting documentation. All mentions were restricted to three documents repeatedly attached to discussions or actions with little to no modifications.

SBE (Internal) Curiosity. The first document appeared on June 5th and June 6th meetings in 2019. The document referenced a local NC school district's equity framework established in July 2013. This was presented to the SBE as they considered their Resolution for Equity as well as SBE Goal 1—to eliminate opportunity gaps. SBE meeting minutes suggested neutral to positive sentiment based on comments from state board members. For example, the following comments were made:

> Mr. Ford stated that WCPSS was doing some premier work . . .
>
> Dr. Oxendine asked if they were familiar with the Indian Education Project and have they worked with that initiative?
>
> Mr. Buxton asked if there was any data from the district level which tells them whether they were finding success in their work, that they would either raise up or recommend to the Board that they the Board should be thinking about from an equity standpoint.
>
> Chairman Davis commended Dr. Trice and the Wake County Public School System for taking this on. He added that this was likely the most important work they could do in North Carolina to ensure the long-term success of our students.

Public (External) Intimidation and Ignorance. The second document linked to utterances of critical race in SBE meeting minutes captures a general ignorance around what critical race theory is, as evidenced by confusion around the theory as a training or teaching, its origins, and its application. The second document was referenced during the COVID-19 global pandemic—NC's American Rescue Plan (ARP), which was addressed in minutes to approve.

The plan was addressed over a 6-month period, from June 2021 to January 2022. Mentions of critical race during 2021 and 2022 were negative in sentiment in reference to external feedback gathered by the SBE on the plan. The public feedback accounted for the majority of critical race, and subsequently CRT in reference to critical race, including references to cultural relevance or cultural responsiveness, documented in SBE minutes.

On June 17, 2021, an action and subsequent recommendation were made for the SBE to "approve the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ARP ESSER) State Application for submission to the Department of Education." In the development of the plan, the SBE requested feedback from the field. Feedback returned on the ESSER application was categorized. More specifically, SBE minutes indicated:

> NCDPI made [a] template available for public comment prior to the submission to the US Department of Education for 30 days. Over the course of the 30-day period, we [NCDPI received] 230 comments and categorized them as follows with the relative percentages of each Technical Correction (<1%); Support (<1%); Question (<1%); Rejection of Funding (1%); Third Party Solicitation (1%); Social Emotional Learning (1.7%); General Commentary (6.5%); and Critical Race Theory (88%).

The Office of Learning Recovery and Acceleration along with the Office of Federal Programs Monitoring and Support who collaboratively developed the NC ARP ESSER State Plan (North Carolina State Board of Education, 2021), shared as an asterisk within the minutes and tied to the critical race category, that "It is important to note that critical race theory is not mentioned in the ARP ESSER State Plan Template" (p. 4). References of critical race or CRT by the public were all external and negative in sentiment. Each comment spoke to a call to action, which in combination with its public comment relative percentage of 88% I interpreted to be an

intimidation tactic. Public comments called for resistance to what was perceived to be an indoctrination of NC students on CRT or culturally relevant teaching/training. Based on public comments in 2021 captured in SBE meeting minutes, the NC public perceived critical race and CRT to be the same. Additionally, critical race was perceived to be racist or socialist teaching. Three examples of the public comments are provided in Table 47.

Table 47

Example of Public Comments to ARP ESSER State Plan

NC county	NC SBE region	Comment
New Hanover	Southeast	STOP!! CRT should not be taught to our children, in that, you are instructing our children racist wrongful thinking in doing so. There was not a race problem until the Democrats started pushing and brainwashing Americans in to thinking there was. The dumbing down of our education system has been in play for crap such as this.
Wake	North Central	I am opposed to the public school system incorporating CRT, culturally relevant programs and using any form of SEL with our students.
Davidson	Piedmont-Triad	Stop The Funding Of culturally relevant Training for teachers!!! Culturally relevant means socialistic Marxist indoctrination and We as citizens of NC won't stand for it! Protect our children!!!

SBE (Internal) Response. The third document was a document referencing voices from the field reported back to the SBE for learning recovery considerations. Critical race is mentioned in the qualitative research report to NC general assembly and under research aims and questions. The document presented:

> Researchers affiliated with the Rural Education Institute (REI) at ECU will collaborate with North Carolina Region 1 and 2 school districts to identify the impact, if any, of a Summer Learning Program (during the COVID-19 pandemic) on members' (teachers,

> school, parents, students and/or community) perceptions, engagement, and lived experiences. The conceptual model for our study is developed from two frameworks (1) critical race theory and (2) rural cultural wealth. (April 5, 2023, p. 200)

Although referenced in the research itself, the presentation based on the research's findings did not mention critical race, nor did the statements from presenters, or comments by board members as captured within the minutes. The only non document-related mention of critical race was a comment from Board Member White. The comment was written in the January 5, 2022, SBE minutes. White "brought to the attention of the Board feedback received in an email pertaining to a $7 million investment into Programming at Frank Porter Graham (FPG) Child Development Center amid issues noted as critical race theory and anti-racism." Although critical race was rarely to never mentioned by individual SBE members (internal), and rarely to never did these mentions indicate negative sentiment, the one SBE member's mention of critical race after 2021 public comments (external) was in response to a public comment (external) and put into question the funding of an SBE initiative.

Resistance to Change. There were two mentions repeated in two separate documents shared across four meetings (June 5th and 6th in 2019 and April 5th and 6th in 2023) that address the use of critical race in practice rather than in reference to comments from the public. The 2019 mention was during a presentation from a district. The 2023 mention was during a presentation from research completed by an external group during the summer of 2021 on NC summer programs seeking to recover learning lost. In the 2023 minutes, critical race was brought up as one of the lenses in which the research was conducted. Critical race was never mentioned in SBE meeting minutes between January 2018 and June 2023 as a theory used to guide the work of equity at the state level. In conclusion, SBE occurrences and comments around utterances of

racism, internal and external utterances of critical race, and NC's educational history described in Part 2 of Chapter 2, further speak to an internal and external resistance to educational transformation and change in NC (see Figure 28). Whether the primary push was external was unclear, but a document analysis of SBE meeting minutes between January 2018 and June 2023 offered evidence of a resistance to change as pushed by some state leaders, some local public leaders, and by the public.

Summary. The SBE minutes portrayed a picture of leadership grappling with the need for educational transformation. The often various iterations and revisions on documents (i.e., studies standards, the equity resolution) indicated a lack of consensus or clear direction. More specifically, the resolution on equity showcases the challenges in rallying support for transformative changes, especially with conflicting views from board members. The reluctance by some to address sensitive issues, as was seen with the removal of terms like "systemic" when discussing racism or discrimination, may hamper genuine discussion and transformative change in NC.

Conversely, there is a growing acknowledgment of the need to reflect the nation's diversity, which, if not silenced, may lead to positive steps toward a more inclusive education. The continued discussion around social studies content and other topics indicates an active engagement in refining the education system. Also, there appears to be internal willingness and curiosity to understand and implement best practices developing among SBE members. If the willingness and curiosity outweigh the discomfort, there may be space in NC's public educational system for meaningful and equitable change.

Interviews

An exploration of the first-person accounts of education in NC helped make sense (Weick, 1995) of, and further contextualize the problem of racial educational inequity and opportunity gaps in NC. To discover truth and reality, and to contextualize education in North Carolina from the point of view of someone who has lived it, NC public school graduates were invited to provide qualitative data adding to this research in the form of a conversational semistructured interview. Participation time was up to 60 minutes.

Lived Experiences Interviews

Lived experience interviews offered stories and detailed examples of remembrances from public school graduates of attending school in NC and their remembrances of interactions with various subgroups of students and staff.

Table 48 shows the demographics of NC graduates interviewed about their lived experiences in the NC public education systems. Lived experience interviewees were initially selected to support an overview of education in NC for Chapter 2 but details from one interview offered insightful information toward Research Question 2: What systemic factors appear as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in N.C.? To what extent are the systemic factors racialized? Upon receiving modification approvals, additional NC graduates were interviewed. Interview responses help identify stubborn or persistent disparities across the NC landscape. The five lived experience interviews spanned nearly 30 years of the NC landscape, from the 1970s to the early 2000s. Experiences include effects on education from the *Leandro* ruling.

Table 48

Demographics of Participants - Lived Experiences

Demographic	Kendra	Erika	Connor	Letticia	Rema
Race/ethnicity	White	Black	White	Black	Bi-racial
Gender	Female	Female	Male	Female	Female
Age	58	52	49	50	40
State of origin	Illinois	New York	North Carolina	North Carolina	Outside U.S.
Grade level entered NC	6th grade	7th grade	--	--	10th grade
K–12 experience region(s)	Western, Piedmont Triad	North Central	Piedmont Triad	Piedmont Triad	Sandhills
NC county of HS graduation	Forsyth	Wake	Forsyth	Davidson	Scotland
HS grad year	1983	1989	1991	1991	2001
Higher ed in NC?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Sector/level	Public/school	Public/state	Public/school	Public/district	Public/state

Demographics. Interviewees' ages ranged between early 40s to late 50s. Four of the five interviewees completed higher education in NC. All five interviewees currently resided and worked in NC, and in the context of public K–12 education. Three of the five interviewees began their career in the private sector, and outside the field of education. One interviewee, Connor, entered the field slightly less than 10 years ago. Two of the five interviewees were NC natives. Kendra transplanted from the Midwest (Illinois), Erika transplanted from the east coast (New York), and Rema transplanted from outside of the United States. Experiences with special education, referred to as exceptional children (EC), in NC, were shared by Kendra and Erika. Connor shared his experiences as a student classified as having behavioral issues. Insight into advanced learning opportunities was elucidated by Kendra, Letticia, and Rema. Rema indicated her experiences as a multilingual learner.

Kendra's Lived Experience. Kendra was a White female in her late 50s. Kendra moved to NC in 1976. She attended all her secondary education and college education in NC starting in

the sixth grade. Kendra's secondary school experience was split between the Western Region and the Piedmont Triad region of the state. Kendra spent Grades 6–9 in Buncombe County near the mountains between NC and Tennessee. The remaining high school years were spent in Forsyth County, roughly 150 miles east of Buncombe County.

Kendra faced challenges in her education. One of the challenges centered on forming positive adult–student relationships. According to Kendra, sixth grade was still elementary school at the time. She immediately struggled with feeling accepted by her teachers. For example, Kendra shared, "[When] I moved here in the sixth grade, I was extremely far ahead of most of my peers and most of my teachers hated me for that." Kendra associated being ahead of her peers with being hated by her teachers and with feelings of isolation. Kendra felt isolated because she was set apart from the rest of her peers and being given different work. For example, Kendra stated, "I was kind of isolated while I was reading."

With respect to instruction, there appeared to be a strong emphasis on reading fluency at best, and not much more. Kendra said, "I spent my entire time reading textbooks." The challenge she faced had to do with rigor, limited content, and a lack of diversity in instructional strategies. For example, Kendra shared:

> I pretty much spent most of my [sixth grade] year reading all of the school textbooks on tape. [Teachers] would have [books on tape] for kids who couldn't read English or couldn't read well . . . because I already knew all the materials. So they'd give me my work for the month and I'd finish it up, and then I'd have the rest of the month to read on tape . . . I hope they've demolished those tapes since then.

Even when other instructional activities were offered, they were still limited to reading, emphasizing fluency. From Kendra's narrative, learning was isolating for students either behind

or ahead of learning. When ahead, a student was provided individual reading, and when behind, students were given audiobooks. Personalized or mastery learning were not educational approaches used in the classroom. Kendra discussed EC students. Kendra shared:

> I did see a lot of students with disabilities that year because sometimes they'd let me go read in person to some of the kids instead of just reading 'em on tape. So that way I wasn't sitting in a room by myself . . . The kids that didn't read well, I probably knew more of them than the kids that could read at my level because, or I just, I spent a lot of time reading to them and so we'd get to know each other then spent a lot of time in the library cuz that's where I read.

As far as racial diversity was concerned, Kendra shared it was limited. Although not directly stated, it appeared students of color were placed with groups of students with disabilities. When asked about learning diversity and racial diversity, Kendra shared, "I had a couple of friends who were not white, but it was a very white school." Following this statement, she shared details concerning supporting reading for students with disabilities and the friendships she made because, like her, they were isolated from the main classroom.

Regarding the remainder of middle school, Kendra developed her love for science in seventh grade where her teacher would take the class outside and she learned to appreciate school more from a more attentive staff from middle school (Grades 7–8). From Kendra's accounts, there was willingness from the middle school administrator to offer more opportunities to students and to provide changes. Kendra stated:

> I felt like they were pushing kids. There was a group of us that wanted Latin and they couldn't get Latin. So, the principal met with us [about our request. She asked us] what we would want instead of Latin. They were trying; they were pushing forward I think in

> the next couple of years. They got Latin over that middle school. So, um, they were trying to push forward and get new things.

She went to ninth grade in a new school but still in Buncombe County. Kendra remembered everyone being excited about the new school because it was new. She spoke of participating in clubs and sports and having opportunities different from those in Grades 6–8. It appeared due to the change in level (i.e., elementary to secondary), the newness of the school, or simply policy changes that caught up to the classroom, Kendra experienced more extracurricular and content diversity in high school.

Upon moving to Forsyth County in 10th grade, Kendra experienced bussing and integration. Students were bussed for an hour and a half to a 2-grade level high school—one school for ninth and 10th grade and bussed to another school for Grades 11–12. Even with these integration efforts, the integration was limited across course levels. For example, Kendra indicated, “There were no people of color in any of my honors classes.”

She experience 10th grade downtown “where you could smell the tobacco and the bread making all at the same time,” and she went to the last 2 years of high school in a more suburban setting. Kendra shared:

> So that’s how they were keeping our balance back then. . . . There was an in town group and then a suburb group and you just took turns going in town and out of town. So, 2 years you spent, you know, in the neighborhood where there were colored people and then the next 2 years you spent in the neighborhood where there weren’t colored people but the colored people got bussed to you or you got bussed the colored people. I remember I used to ride the bus for 45 minutes there, 45 minutes back every day.

When she discussed taking chorus, yearbook, honors classes, and advanced placement, students in high grade levels experienced more social and advanced learning opportunities. I observed a variation in resources and rigor from elementary to secondary school levels and from below, at, and above grade levels from Kendra's overall K–12 experience in NC public schools.

The Public School Testing Program, initiated in 1977, influenced Kendra's schooling experience. In this program, student skills and knowledge were assessed in core subjects. Initially, the focus of the program was primarily on reading and mathematics assessments for certain grade levels. The program eventually expanded to cover multiple subjects and grades. Students like Kendra, who graduated in the early 1980s, would have been among the early cohorts to undergo this assessment.

Erika's Lived Experience. Erika was a Black women in her early 50s. Erika was originally from New York but lived and worked in NC since moving in the seventh grade (i.e., 1983). Her secondary school experience was predominantly in the North Central region of NC, specifically in Wake County, a populated county of the state where Raleigh, the capital, is located.

Erika shared accounts of having participated in several opportunities in school. She mentioned helping in the media center, being on student council and student government, and playing sports. Erika completed her sports experience recreationally outside of school. Like Kendra, Erika struggled with feeling accepted but more from her peers than by her teachers. Erika indicated:

> When we moved down here [to NC], I had never been to school with students who looked like me. I was used to being the only black student in the classroom. I went to a

> local middle school. I found myself feeling very out of place. I was in advanced classes. I worked very hard to impress my teachers. Socially, it took me a minute to fit in.

Although she graduated 6 years later, like Kendra, Erika recalled the bussing of students to "balance" diversity in schools. Erika recounted her experiences of living in a predominantly White and affluent neighborhood, the North side, and how students from the South side, who looked like her, were bussed in. Erika stated:

> There were students on a bus that did not live in the neighborhood. Seemed not as affluent as where I lived. I was looked at by those students as a rich girl. "You're acting white." . . . I longed and was interested in being with them. They were tight with each other. I stuck out differently.

Erika shared several experiences in NC when she was isolated from her peers but did not recall the demographic breakdown of teachers and students, except to say, without bussing, the school demographics matched her predominantly White neighborhood. Erika's educational journey was influenced by a desire for acceptance and, to some extent, self-hatred. Erika shared it was not until years later, outside of her K–12 experience, she learned to love her color. Erika shared, "I had it all wrong back then" and "I needed to be proud of my brown skin. I needed to be proud of my hair. And I needed to be proud of who [Erika] was."

NC was Erika's first experience going to school with students of color. Prior to coming to NC, she longed to look more like her White classmates, sharing stories of her unbraiding her hair to be more accepted. Erika said, "I lived in two worlds." Like Kendra, Erika did not share stories of going to school with multilingual learners, or recalling classes taught by Black teachers. Erika did, however, share her experience with students with disabilities based on her brother's experience. She stated:

> My interactions with students with disabilities has been quite interesting for me. I am one of 4. My brother was born with hydrocephalus. He has experienced a severe learning disability. He wore a helmet and spent months in a bubble because his immune system was shot. He was in and out of the hospital until age seven. At the time, I didn't understand that he was a student with disabilities. He didn't start school until he was eight. He was in self-contained classes. He was teased a lot, and I was his defender. Almost had a soft spot with students with needs. I didn't support anyone teasing him. Back then it was a lot of ostracizing and teasing. He was more on the severe end of behavior. I was the one who watched her go to an IEP [individualized education plan] and came back crying. He was not mainstreamed until high school. Things were different in NY [New York] than in NC. He was teased a lot and my mom felt deflated after IEP meetings. Seeing him teased at school was hard because I knew what it took to keep him alive.

In Kendra's experience with Exceptional Children (referring to special education in NC), she did not make any statements about bullying; however, Erika witnessed the day to day of education in self-contained classrooms in NC in the 1980s. Her brother had similar experiences both in and out of school. Erika described how in middle school Bible Camp in NC, "the kids teased my brother and they were picking on him and throwing rocks at him." All these experiences combined pushed Erika to choose a career in education where she specialized in EC and trained in Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol to better support multilingual learners.

Erika's overall K–12 experience in NC public schools was one of alienation and integration through bussing to increase diversity in schools that were otherwise predominantly one race. The Basic Education Program (BEP) influenced Erika's educational experience. The

BEP was launched in NC in 1985, at the start of Erika's high school experience. The BEP defined curriculum content and resource standards for each grade level. It aimed to ensure a standard quality of education across the state. Students like Erika who graduated after this point may have experienced a more uniform curriculum and resource distribution across school districts. Erika's many extracurricular and course content opportunities may have been linked to the affluence of the area, helping school funding. Thus far between Kendra and Erika's K–12 experience spanning the mid-1970s to the late 1980s, a separation of students by learning capability and a persistent disparity of diversity in staffing and across the student body emerged.

Connor's Lived Experience. Connor was a White man in his early 50. He was a NC native who was raised in rural NC and attended elementary school in a rural environment around predominantly White communities, and moved closer to the city for secondary school within an emerging urban environment where he lived within a mixed community. When sharing his account of schooling, Connor mostly recalled his high school experience. Connor shared:

> I didn't grow up in an all White community or all one community. I grew up in predominantly Black spaces . . . I went to a predominantly African American high school. I wasn't sheltered, uh, growing up. It wasn't an all white community that I lived and moved in. So when I say varied, that's what I mean. I was exposed to the black community and the White community, which is very unique. In high school it was very unique in the sense that the White community that was there was really the southern part of town. They come from farmers and people that lived in the country. I came from that also, elementary [school-wise]. I grew up on a tobacco farm.

> Now in high school, I didn't identify as a young teenager with that side of the White crowd that was really country and farmer oriented. I identified more with the Black population . . . My experiences were weaving in and out of communities.

When initially asked, Connor did not recall what he identified as "hard experiences" going to school and instead said, "I remember school quite a bit. [The] experience was nice and fun [and learning] was always hands-on. [Also . . . I had] a good network and good transition to secondary school." Upon further probing, Connor offered insight into schooling for students deemed as having behavioral challenges. Whether his experiences being labeled a student with behavioral challenges contributed to his association or sense of belonging with his non-White peers was unclear, but Connor described a clear shift in racial spaces after middle school and graduating from what was now known as one of two remaining historically Black high schools in the school district.

After moving from a rural area, Connor struggled with school. He shared a troublesome time from his lived experiences when he described a brief experience in an alternative school where behaviorally disruptive students were sent and separated from their peers. In this account, Connor told stories of regulated segregation based on behavior and disability. Connor provided an account of his experience as a troubled NC youth attending public school. Connor stated:

> I got into fights and [was] suspended quite a few times [in middle school]. So, because of that, I, my beginning of my freshman year, I was placed in a school that . . . It was rough. And when I went to that school . . . You had to have a badge, and you had to punch in a time clock . . . like you went to a job . . . That badge kept you on your floor and your area and you couldn't go anywhere else . . . I begged my mom to take me out of that school.

> . . . When I meant rough, I meant like there were kids there that were way tougher than me and like there were fights. You see fights occur. It was very carceral; it was like a prison. You were limited to this section, and you just always felt like you needed to watch your back when you were there. It felt like a prison . . . I didn't like it, you know, as a 13-year-old . . . I was scared straight. I remember it was a diverse population, white, black, male, female. It was just everybody there.
>
> There were [also students with disabilities] there. And I don't know if that was just like a different section of the building because they weren't in my section . . . I remember the buses moreso than anything. They would pull in and like, you know, the kids would wheel out on the elevator.

Of all the school demographics participants described, Connor's alternative school appeared to be the most "diverse" and non-reliant on school busing for integration. Diversity in this context was specific to Black and White student populations. Though Kendra and Erika could speak to seeing students of color in their school, they were students intentionally bussed in from other neighborhoods. Also, Kendra and Erika's schools were typically schools in more affluent sections of the district, and as such, neighborhoods, and the school itself were described as "White." Once Connor was removed from this alternative school setting, he too experienced bussing like Kendra and Erika described in their accounts.

After leaving the alternative school, Connor shared stories of graduating high school. He recalled White country students sitting together on one side, Black students on another, and a few White students like Connor, who "navigated Black spaces." Connor did not share accounts of Black students navigating White spaces. With stories he shared of confederate flags, racist remarks, and cliques, it was unlikely Black students would have been welcomed into White

spaces. Also, Connor shared the school experienced a race riot in 1992, the year after he graduated.

Connor connected his background and person to his experiences in high school. He found a sense of belongingness and spent his days involved in theater and band. Connor shared how those educational opportunities helped him be more successful academically and graduate, and helped him to where he traveled for years after high school with a band. Connor shared:

> I traveled around with like a reggae band forever, making music. And so I grew dreadlocks and I had like really long dreadlocks. And [I know] that could be misconstrued or [categorized as] appropriation, right? But [for me], it was more for me than that . . . it's hard to pinpoint how, you know, other people are attracted to other cultures. At least for me, there's no one moment of transition.

Regarding policies in NC influencing Connor's educational experience, by 1989—the same year of Erika's graduation—the School Improvement and Accountability Act mandated school systems to adopt plans for school-based management and accountability. Students like Connor undergoing education at this time would have been impacted by new accountability measures.

Letticia's Lived Experience. Letticia was a Black woman in her early 50s who was born, raised, and attended all levels of the NC public education system within a mostly rural environment. Letticia would have felt the same effects as Connor with respect to educational policies and mandates, albeit from a different school district. As Kendra, Erika, and Connor alluded to in their narratives, there has been a long-standing story of segregation in schools in NC, but Letticia provided more concrete examples outside of bussing.

Letticia's experience attending the City School system was unique. The county was split into multiple school districts where, as Letticia said, "more African Americans were in [the] City schools and more White students in County schools." Letticia shared a story about the new school and who was permitted to attend. She said, "Behind our apartments and woods was the country club. The country club kids were allowed to go to the new school." Instead, students like her attended old schools like "[Grover], a K–1 school, closed down because it was so old. [Pryor] is still old to this day, and [Deklan] was an old African American, historically Black, High school and is now closed down." At the time Lettica attended elementary school, school students were separated by socioeconomic status. She shared the [White] country club kids went to one school and other students went to another.

Demographically speaking, she said, "We had White and Black students and a few Cambodians" due to a recent influx. This changed in secondary school. Letticia shared, "There was only one high school and one middle school. We all came together [including the country club kids]. They (referring to White students) were clearly able to have certain classes . . . This was also an experience my daughter (who graduated in 2019) also had." Due to her experiences in school, Letticia paid better attention to segregation across the schools and within classrooms. She recounted:

> Status and being in class with certain kids was important to [White kids]. Had I not been watching the process, I wouldn't have seen it. [At the City Schools], we are now allowing more Black and Brown students in competitive classes.

Letticia's story was a mixed account of her recollected experiences and what she remembered her daughter going through as she navigated the same system nearly 30 years later. She saw a resegregation of schools but couched in schools as honors classes and academically

and intellectually gifted programs. Regarding advanced learning educational opportunities, she shared hers and her daughter's experience by saying, "They didn't let many African Americans in those spaces;" as such, her daughter experienced overt or covert racist acts from students. As far as the demographic of teachers was concerned, Letticia recalled having a Black teacher in second grade. Otherwise, "there were mostly white female teachers."

Rema's Lived Experience. Rema was a biracial woman from outside the United States who began her educational experience in NC in the 10th grade. At the time of Rema's educational experience, the *Leandro* (1997) case was already in court and the decision that students were not receiving their constitutional right to a sound and basic education, had already been decided.

Rema's experience in NC schools began in the 10th grade. Prior to arriving in NC, she attended public schools in California for 2 years, and prior, she lived overseas. Rema's lived experiences provided additional narratives around advanced learning opportunities in NC schools, segregation, and teacher diversity. Like Kendra, Rema recalled hours-long bus rides to school. Also, Rema's small town rural experience mirrored Letticia, though a decade later. As was the case in Letticia's school system, Rema only had one high school. She shared, "There was only one high school. There was the junior high that went to ninth grade and starting in 10th grade was [the] Senior High. And so that's when I went for one semester." Rema's lived experience mirrored Letticia's daughter, who graduated 18 years after Rema, around advanced learning and how it was used to keep students segregated. Rema recounted her first day at the school. Rema stated:

I remember being brought into the office and there was this White guy, older gentleman . . . I remember him because I was already taking college prep and honors classes in ninth

> grade in California. I remember some teachers making recommendations for me to take honors classes and possibly try my hand at AP [advanced placement] classes [would I have stayed in California]. And so when he was trying to set my schedule and I asked if I [can take] honors English class, . . . he kind of looked at me and [said] it's full . . . He had my transcripts in his hand . . . I remembered that [encounter] because later in that semester [the English] teacher [asked me] . . . "why didn't you [take] the honors class? It's empty.

First semester, Rema took general level classes that entire semester regardless of what her transcripts indicated. Like Kendra, Rema found herself acting as a teacher's aide and supporting other students when a teacher was absent, rather than being provided challenging work. For example, in one class, Rema recalled a memory. Rema stated:

> The teacher was pregnant and she took maternity leave within weeks [of my arrival to the school] and gave me her lesson plans and I guess told the sub that I was gonna be teaching her class because I found myself [helping the sub] and still had [my own] separate work to do.

With respect to the demographics of the school, it was primarily White and Black students. Most of Rema's classes consisted of Black students. Most teachers she recounted were White and female. By the end of the semester, Rema moved to a nearby school district with her guardian. She said, "It was kind of a relief to move." Demographically speaking, the area and school consisted of White, Black, and Native American students. Rema stated:

> There was a little bit more, if you could call it diversity in Scotland County [NC] because there were White students, Black students, Native Americans, Asian students [from India

> primarily] and again, not a, not a huge group of Latinx students that I, at least that I recognized or that I remembered to have recognized.

Most teachers again were White. Rema recalled encountering one Black female teacher in 11th grade—a math teacher.

Rema was a product of the ABCs of Public Education, which was implemented to focus on accountability, emphasizing basics, and local control. This program introduced a statewide testing system and performance-based accountability for schools. Students like Rema experienced a shift toward a more standardized and results-oriented education system. The next year, in 1997, the Excellent Schools Act was passed. This act aimed at elevating student achievement by enhancing the quality of educators. Students like Rema would have been taught by teachers having undergone rigorous standards and provided with performance-based incentives. Upon her graduation in 2001, the federal act, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), was enacted. NCLB mandated annual testing in reading and math for Grades 3–8 and once students were in high school, school accountability was emphasized. Although students like Rema, who graduated by 2001, might not have directly experienced the full impact of NCLB, the lead-up discussions and state preparations for the act might have had some influence in their final school years.

Emerging Themes. Patterns gleaned from the lived experiences of Kendra, Erika, Connor, Letticia, and Rema included isolation based on academic performance, limited racial integration (including limited access to teachers of color), exclusionary treatment of students with disabilities (EC students), and behavioral regulation and segregation.

With respect to academic isolation, both Kendra and Rema experienced isolation in schools based on their academic achievements and abilities. For Kendra, being ahead of her

peers led to feelings of isolation and resentment from teachers. Similarly, Rema's academic achievements were not recognized, leading her to take on a teaching role rather than being challenged academically. Regarding integration, despite efforts like bussing, true integration remained a challenge. For Kendra, this was evident when she mentioned no people of color were in her honors classes. Connor also described racial divides, with White and Black students often keeping separated spaces. Letticia and Rema's experiences further solidified the observation schools were still segregating students, especially in advanced learning opportunities. Furthermore, Erika's experience of being perceived as affluent and being labeled as "acting white" highlights the intersection of race and socioeconomic status in shaping students' school experiences.

Although Kendra, Erika, and Connor did not explicitly share these details, their teacher demographics included some Black teachers; however they did not have accounts of Latinx teachers. Most of their accounts were of White teachers, primarily White female teachers. There was limited access to teachers of color. Kendra's science teachers whom she connected with were described as White; Erika connected with teachers who were kind to her and each were, in her words, "White older women." Connor was in a unique space across his high school experience but also shared, "There were more white teachers, but there were also a lot more black educators." All these experiences spanning over 20 years of education in NC provide evidence of a disparity specific to teachers of color in NC public schools.

With respect to students with disabilities, both Kendra and Erika provided insight into their experience. Kendra had positive interactions with these students through reading, though in separate settings. Erika's protective relationship with her brother shed light on the potential challenges and bullying these students faced. Other practices were discovered in Connor's

experience of how behavioral challenges were addressed in a punitive manner, with schools resembling correctional facilities more than educational institutions.

Another factor connecting Kendra, Erika, and Connor was variances in affective and material education supports. When bereft of engaging school activities or of positive teacher–student relationships, students' lived experience increased in negative sentiment toward schooling. For example, Kendra described a love of science after experiencing more diverse instructional activities (e.g., going outside). Erika's more positive accounts were in connection to relationships developed with teachers. She shared:

> Ms. J [who was an] older white woman . . . loved my work. She thought I had nice penmanship. She liked the way I did my notes. And she just gave me such good feedback. She wrote all over my papers saying how wonderful they were. She really made me feel like I was super duper smart.

As I aggregated these lived experiences, it appears their sentiments on schooling were influenced by relationships and by the presence of educational support or opportunities. For example, Connor felt his middle school teachers "didn't care" and they would have been the ones to recommend him for his carceral experience at the alternative school. This suggests a facilitator to education in NC schools is in the presence of educational opportunities and support (affective and material).

Summary. Systemic factors influencing educational achievement include parent education, preschool access, childhood nutrition, health, individual and neighborhood poverty, and segregation (O'Day & Smith, 2016). These determinants significantly predict individual economic outcomes. Educational disparities in public K–12 schools, rooted in the normalization

of racism, are highlighted by several researchers (Scheetz & Senge, 2016) and align with critical race theory's emphasis on U.S. racism (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Tate, 1997).

In response to Research Question 2—what systemic factors appeared as barriers or facilitators—segregation was a clear barrier, and educational opportunities proved to be a facilitator. The way schools were structured, especially with tracking for advanced courses or behavioral challenges, perpetuated segregation. This was evident in Connor's experience of a having a school "like a prison" and the general trend of isolating students based on academic achievement, behavior, or race. With respect to systemic facilitators highlighted by student's lived experiences, there were some efforts to integrate schools, as seen in Kendra's bussing experience. The introduction of new courses like Latin, as described by Kendra, also indicated an effort to enhance the educational offerings.

Education Leader Interviews

I used a semistructured interview process with school administrators to elicit deeper information regarding the interviewee's dispositions, skills, and knowledge of the history and factors that impacted their school and school community. The resulting information was then categorized under four TLT tenets.

The four TLT tenets of focus in this research included (a) championing equitable change, (b) addressing power imbalances, (c) promoting democracy through voice, and (d) finding a balance in effecting change. Leaders were urged to introspect on values, power dynamics, and community contexts. Aligned dispositions underscored their commitment to equity, inclusivity, and empowerment of marginalized groups. Leaders then translated these beliefs into tangible actions, such as equity audits, community dialogues, and inclusive policy reassessments. Overall, these tenets of TLT emphasized both introspective reflection and proactive action to foster an

inclusive educational environment. Although racialized barriers persisted, accounts from interviewed participants revealed the potential of transformative leadership among NC school leaders grounded in community engagement, inclusivity, and a deep-rooted understanding of local dynamics.

Table 49 provides a breakdown of interview participants. Of the five school leaders interviewed, all but one held the role of principal, with one holding the role of assistant principal. All interview participants identified as cisgender women. Two interview participants identified as White, two as Black, and one as biracial (Native American and Black). Three of the five interview participants were natives of NC, four of the five experienced a principalship in the Piedmont Triad region (not all with the same district or county within this region), and three of the four were either assistant principals or principals in other regions as well.

Table 49

Demographics of Participants - Education Leadership

Demographic	Melanie	Shanice	Crystal	Annie	Teresa
Role	Principal	Principal	Principal	Assistant Principal	Principal
Race/ethnicity	White	Black	Black	White	Biracial Native American and Black
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Female
State of origin	North Carolina	Virginia	North Carolina	Pennsylvania	North Carolina
Region(s) w/ administration experience	Piedmont Triad	Out of State, Piedmont Triad	Northeast Piedmont Triad	North Central	Northwest, Piedmont Triad

Drawing on the narratives of five school leaders—Annie, Shanice, Crystal, Melanie, and Teresa—leadership narratives in NC's public schools unveiled a complex interplay of dispositions and systemic constraints. Table 50 provides a breakdown of the core components

associated with each of the four tenets of TLT. In addition to giving a concise overview of key factors of four of the eight tenets of Shields's (2010) TLT, Table 50 includes aligned dispositions or characteristics of a leader exhibiting these factors and examples of how the tenets can be operationalized in the actions of educational leaders. These descriptions were used to identify instances in which interviewed educational leaders displayed TL dispositions and in which their actions indicate an operationalization of TL traits.

Table 50

Characteristics Within This Study of Transformative Dispositions

TLT tenet	Tenet components (Shields, 2018)	Reflections and dialogue of the TL (Shields, 2020)	Aligned dispositions	Potential actions of the TL
Dedicated to equitable change	TLs identify new approaches to address inequity - Apply constant questioning to lead to creative new approaches - Leaders maintain an unwavering commitment to addressing inequity	- Reflection on beliefs, values, assumptions - Examination of school data - Understanding of community context	- Commitment to equity and justice - Willingness to question and challenge one's beliefs - Drive to gather and analyze data - Engagement with the community	- Completing an equity audit - Engaging in community dialogues and forums
Addressing inequitable distributions of power	- Examining power is used (Shields, 2020) - "Acknowledging the pervasiveness and hegemony of power and privilege" (Shields, 2011, p. 2) - Reaching new awareness of inequity opens the space for more equitable approaches - Recognizing one's own power and potential for rule-bending - One's power is used explicitly and intentionally to transform	- Reflection on power dynamics - Consideration of policy goals - Understanding of positional and hegemonic power	- Ability to recognize and challenge power imbalances - Desire to empower others - Critical thinking about policy implications	- Reflection on personal power dynamics - Re-evaluating disciplinary policies for inclusivity

TLT tenet	Tenet components (Shields, 2018)	Reflections and dialogue of the TL (Shields, 2020)	Aligned dispositions	Potential actions of the TL
Arguing for democracy through voice	- Conditions under which students can learn freely and fairly to develop their own concepts, opinions, and self-identity are developed - Restoring the voices of teachers, parents, and students (providing a space where they are seen, heard, and empowered) - Knowledge of equity is used to overcome deficit thinking - Taking responsibility for change	- Sharing of power and societal benefits - Reflection on emancipation - Promotion of inclusive and democratic practices	- Belief in participatory leadership - Commitment to giving voice to marginalized groups - Focus on inclusivity and justice	- Involving students and staff in decision-making - Setting up platforms for marginalized voices - Implementing democratic classroom practices
Finding balance and affecting change	- Understanding the need to challenge current practices - Recognizing transformation involves pushback and moral courage	- Reflection on marginalized groups - Asking equity-focused questions	- Commitment to inclusivity and equity - Ability to critically analyze societal structures - Drive to challenge status quo and affect change	- Identifying and addressing disparities in school communities - Promoting awareness campaigns on privilege and marginalization

Melanie's Leadership Best Practices. Melanie was a principal in the Piedmont Triad who identified as a White women. Based on her interview, Melanie characterized two TLT tenets (a) mandate for change and (b) emancipation, democracy, inclusion, and equity. With respect to the mandate for change, Melanie's professional trajectory showcased a commitment to continuous education and personal development. Starting as a third-grade teacher, Melanie pursued a doctorate of education in leadership, thus highlighting her dedication to growth with the aim of effecting change. Also, Melanie addressed the challenges posed by leading a school with a high EC population, acknowledging many of her students faced behavioral issues that

impacted classrooms. She mentioned, “Many of our EC students had behavior issues that negatively impacted the classrooms . . . so educating staff, students, and the community about the rights of [EC students] became my mission.” This statement underscored her proactive approach to addressing specific needs and ensuring equity.

With respect to arguing for democratizing schooling, Melanie emphasized a collaborative approach to school leadership. She outlined a decision-making process in which representatives from all grade levels, EC, encore teachers, parents, and classified staff participated, emphasizing an inclusive approach to decision making. Melanie’s commitment to transparent communication was evident in her insistence on disseminating the school’s mission and vision through multiple channels, including “meetings, online platforms, weekly calls, and on all correspondence.” This approach ensured all stakeholders were informed and had the opportunity to contribute their perspectives.

Melanie’s introduction of professional learning communities (PLCs), which facilitated the exchange of ideas and resources among teachers, demonstrated her initiative to foster a collaborative environment. Additionally, her involvement in the parent teacher association and encouragement of community partners to provide support underscored her leadership style’s emphasis on collective input. Indeed, Melanie’s interview highlighted her dedication to change and democratic schooling. This emphasis was supported by her proactive approach to addressing equity issues, her inclusive decision-making strategies, and her commitment to transparent communication, as evidenced in the interview.

Though Melanie showcased instances of a drive for equity and in creating learning spaces for students by listening to the voices of staff, students, and community, NC has statutes

detailing requirements for school improvement and decision-making practices like those shared by Melanie. For example, § 115C-105.27(a) states:

> The principal of each school, representatives of the assistant principals, instructional personnel, instructional support personnel, and teacher assistants assigned to the school building, and parents of children enrolled in the school shall constitute a school improvement team. The team shall develop a school improvement plan to improve student performance.

School improvement in NC has been focused on having a broad representation from the school to support decision-making processes. Additionally, research-based effective practices asked of schools as part of their decision making include a frequency of meetings, a regular review of data in those meetings, and the use of PLCs to support further capacity development. Using an online platform called Indistar®, school teams are guided through the process of school improvement planning and managing the continuous improvement process. Four examples of the 130 available research-based effective practices for improvement used by more than 95% of schools across the state include:

- A1.03 The LEA/School promotes a school culture in which professional collaboration is valued and emphasized by all.
- B1.03 A [School Improvement] Team consisting of the principal, teachers who lead the Instructional Teams, and other professional staff meets regularly (at least twice a month) to review implementation of effective practices.
- C2.01 The LEA/School regularly looks at school performance data and aggregated classroom observation data and uses that data to make decisions about school improvement and professional development needs.

- E2.01 Parent and/or Community representatives advise the School Leadership Team on matters related to family [and] school relations. (Department of Public Instruction, 2016)

These practices, which guide or advise schools to meet, plan, and make decisions about the school, suggests Melanie may have led with aspects of transformative approaches, such as a mandate for change (or at the very least, being receptive to equitable change). However, other aspects such as democratic schooling, may have been more compliance-driven than transformative.

Shanice's Commitment to Equity. Shanice was a principal in the Piedmont Triad region who identified as a Black woman with 16 years of experience in education. When sharing an artifact describing her time at the school, Shanice shared details of the International Baccalaureate® affirmation created over the summer and implemented with the student body. Shanice stated:

> The affirmation speaks to the culture shift that has taken place and our mission of inclusivity that our program offers our students. Each morning, every student repeats the affirmation as it is led by [me] or an administrator. With pride they say, "Today at [our school] I will be IB. I will think and inquire to become more knowledgeable. I will be open-minded, caring, and I will positively communicate with others. My actions will be balanced, principled, and courageous. And I will reflect so that I can be IB!"

The affirmation captures an aspiration—a vision for what students can be and how they can grow. Shanice's mention of a "culture shift" and a "mission of inclusivity" suggested she valued diversity and inclusiveness and encouraged students to feel similarly. Shanice appeared to be a

leader not just content with the status quo but also was actively seeking to shape and influence the school's culture in alignment with her vision of what it can be.

Shanice placed significant value on understanding her community's sociocultural intricacies. Specifically, she described her school as a "melting pot of students who generally would never interact with each other who now have the opportunity to form friendships because of the choice option my district offers." This suggests a potential commitment to equity and inclusive interaction. Additionally, Shanice's leadership approach gravitated toward a decentralized decision-making model, aiming to address power disparities. She emphasized collaborative leadership and mentions. Shanice stated, "I never wanted to be a dictator. I need my staff to feel as though we are a team." This quote suggests Shanice experienced authoritarian leadership and in reflection of that experience, she made a conscious effort to equalize power dynamics and ensure various voices are heard and validated. The presence of discipline-related goals within the school's improvement plan, even though specific details were not elaborated upon, further hinted at a dedication to equitable policy implementation.

The democratization of schooling was a salient theme in Shanice's leadership style. She clearly stated, "From day 1, I let the staff know what my goals were and how I wanted to reach them. I asked for their input in staff meetings, during [School Improvement Team (SIT)] meetings, etc." This direct engagement with the staff underscored an emphasis on shared power and democratic voice. Moreover, the introduction of social emotional learning practices, where "each morning, every student repeats affirmations," showcased her approach to ensuring students feel valued and have a shared purpose.

Shanice's actions highlighted her proactive stance toward identifying marginalized groups and ensuring their inclusion. This was evident when she said, "As a leader of an IB

school, it is important for me to ensure I have diversity on my staff. Since becoming the leader, we have added seven staff members from international backgrounds." Her active efforts to diversify staff and her endeavors to strengthen community partnerships showcased a dedication to fostering inclusivity and balance.

Although it may appear the most emphasized TLT tenet in Shanice's leadership was emancipation, democracy, inclusion, and equity, Shanice's emphasis on inclusivity in decision making and her desire to lead with a strong mission and vision may do more to showcase a dedication to equitable change. Though she shared statements about never wanting "to be a dictator" and the practice of including staff in decision-making processes, like Melanie, school improvement components of Shanice's interview in which she discussed shared leadership and decision-making practices may have been driven by following statutes, policies, or state recommendations. Alternatively, actions not necessarily tied to potential compliance were Shanice's transformative reflections and dialogue (Shields, 2018) aligned to those displayed by TLs her (a) reflection on beliefs, values, assumptions; (b) examination of school data; and (c) understanding of community context.

Crystal's Transformative Approach. Crystal was a principal in the Piedmont Triad region who identified as a Black woman with over 40 years of experience in education. Crystal's career in education has spanned over 4 decades, with more than 30 years in administration. As the youngest of 12 siblings, she began her professional journey at IBM but soon realized education was her calling. Her administrative role led her to several schools in North Carolina. One of the consistent challenges she faced was teacher recruitment and language access. Crystal shared her leadership style was rooted in "servant leadership."

With respect to the artifacts shared, Crystal showcased “alignment sheets” regarding data evaluation efforts, program progress monitoring, and student early warning systems to identify “at promise” students needing additional support academically or behaviorally. The sheets she shared helped coordinate school goals and emphasized the importance of consistent teaching standards. Crystal’s experience provided insight into the implications of *Leandro* and its role in her decision making, making her more aware of community perceptions.

Several systemic disparities were highlighted in Crystal’s interview: economic, racial, academic achievement, teacher recruitment, and language related. For example, Crystal shared the first time she took a principalship in NC in the 1990s. She commented:

> In a rural area with 1000 students, of which more than 60% qualified for free or reduced lunch. Eighty percent of the students were African American, and 20% [of students] were White. This was the only high school in the area. [The county was] considered one of the poorest counties in NC.

This indicates a significant percentage of students from low-income families all living within specific counties in the state and attending specific schools. Also, such economic disparity can impact resources available to the school and students’ overall well-being.

After leaving the rural area in the Northeast region to come to the Piedmont Triad region, Crystal became principal of her current school in the early 2000s. She left to work as an assistant superintendent for 8 years and returned to the school to finish out a principal level contract with the district, prior to retirement.

During Crystal’s first experience at the school (2004–2008), there were about 1200 students. Crystal shared the school was predominantly composed of approximately 70% African American students and 30% White students. The school was a historical African American

school, “one of the few still left in the county.” Crystal also shared there was “lots of support from alumni associations but [the school was] still not considered a well performing school.” Accountability was primarily focused on End of Course exams (EOCs). Crystal shared, “It was up and down.” She continued:

> Judge Manning [who presided over *Leandro* at the time] came in response to *Leandro* to look closely at the school. [At the time], the lowest 5% high schools in the state were named as takeover schools right. This happened right when I began as a principal the first time.

Crystal provided a first-hand account of dealing with “pressure from the school, district, and school board” and with the community’s responses. At the time, despite the stigma of the school’s label, Crystal shared the school consistently produced college-bound students, though test performance suggested otherwise. This suggests a discrepancy between student performance metrics and students’ actual potential or outcomes. Crystal also shared there was a lot of support from the community during the threat of takeover. She stated:

> So much support [and it] brought over a lot of engagement. It took a village. . . . As a leader, I had not previously dealt with the stigma of [the] low performing school [label]. Even though scores were low, we graduated doctors, lawyers, and more. The school was a family school; a title I school as well . . . [so it was] hard to find teachers . . . so [I] began to hire alumni to support the school.

Crystal’s account of it being “hard to find teachers” emphasized the challenge of attracting and retaining qualified teachers in certain areas and for certain schools across the state. Also, the threat of takeover that Crystal and the community experienced indicates the pressures schools face from external entities and the potential repercussions of being labeled as underperforming.

Some of Crystal's accounts were recorded within local journals because of its connection to *Leandro* and because of its 'family' atmosphere.

Regarding the second time Crystal returned to lead the school in 2017, Crystal shared, "[when] I went back, the school was labeled as low-performing [again]" and there was a demographic shift; "the population had changed to 75% African American, about 25% Hispanic, or it might have been [closer to] 70-30." This shift persisted to what was at the time of this study—60% African American students and 40% Hispanic students. Crystal stated:

> We were still a free and reduced lunch school, and we were a title, one school. So this time the challenge was a little bit different for me, because all of my experience that I had so far I had no experience of working with Hispanic families and Hispanic students. I was up for the challenge . . . So, we put some plans in place . . . When I first got there, we had nobody in the building that would do translation for Hispanic parents. They would have to call the Spanish teacher out of the classroom to do translations and IEP meetings. So, the first thing on my list was to get us some bilingual workers there and end up hiring one in the front office and end up hiring one as a data manager. I ended up hiring one as a parent engagement person [too]. So, we had some staff members that our Hispanic population could identify with . . . The first year I was there as the principal, we had the highest growth and we were in the top 5 of the State [and] we had the highest growth . . . in high school.

This change began with hiring administrative assistants or coordinators for the front office, in parent engagement, and in student services. The school had a predominantly African American and Hispanic population, and there were initial inadequacies in addressing the linguistic needs of Hispanic families. The racial, academic, and linguistic disparities Crystal

experienced when she returned to the school underscored the multifaceted challenges Crystal encountered as an educational leader in her region. Additionally, these challenges were present in the early 200s when Crystal was first placed as principal. Even without the threat of takeover, across a span of nearly 20 years, the same school experienced systemic disparities acted as barriers to student success and to the school's transformation.

Even with these systemic barriers, Crystal's dispositions aligned with those of a transformative leader. Crystal's leadership aligns with all the TLT tenets to some extent, but she appears to emphasize (a) arguing for democracy through voice, and (b) a dedication to equitable change the most, closely followed by (c) finding balance and affecting change. Crystal continuously underscored the importance of including everyone's voice in decision-making processes. This was evident when she talked about students, teachers, and the broader community, emphasizing the need for dialogue and participation. She actively worked to transform the school culture into one where students and teachers felt safe to speak up.

Crystal's leadership showcased a dedication to creating equitable change, especially in the context of schools facing challenges related to socioeconomic disparities and diverse student populations. Her efforts to hire bilingual staff to cater to a growing Hispanic population and her commitment to addressing the specific needs of her school community underlined this dedication. Also, Crystal's work in navigating external pressures (e.g., the label of "low performing" and the threat of takeover by the state), addressing perceptions, and ensuring positive growth highlighted her dedication to bringing about change. Her commitment to challenging the status quo while maintaining balance was evident in her approach to leadership.

Annie's Proclivity for Improvement. Annie was an assistant principal in the North Central region who identified as a White woman with 12 years of experience in education. In

Annie's interview, she discussed the challenges and efforts of her low-wealth school within a high-wealth district. Her actions, such as seeking additional i-Ready licenses and directly intervening with student education, demonstrated a commitment to equity. She also highlighted the importance of knowing students personally and emphasizes refining teaching practices. From her responses, it was clear Annie prioritized equitable change in her leadership role.

Annie's leadership approach prominently aligned with Shields's (2018, 2020) tenet of being dedicated to equitable change. It was evident Annie's leadership approach and actions resonated strongly with Shields's tenets of TL. For example, Annie shed light on her dedication to addressing educational disparities by actively recognizing and addressing gaps. She revealed, "Now that doesn't mean that every single whim that we had was funded. But . . . we advocated for those additional licenses and we were able to get it." This commitment to pushing for resources where needed underscores a dedication to equitable change. Annie showcased a willingness to support the needs of the school as a whole and to use her power to do so.

With respect to addressing inequitable distributions of power, Annie's candid reflection about her leadership style encapsulated her approach to power dynamics. She stated, "I am very much a proponent of coach them up or coach them out," highlighting her clear stance on mentorship and recognizing when educators are misaligned with the school's mission. She added:

> My biggest goal was to be in at least 5 to 10 classrooms every single day during their math block, and that was a real difference for our teacher. They've never really gotten in the moment type feedback or significant amounts of feedback from their prior administration. But, again, we framed it with the understanding that our goal is just for everyone to get better. So that we can be better for our students, which results in better

> outcomes for students. And so we really tried to frame it from that coaching perspective of like, We are in this together. This is not me just coming in and sometimes I would ask you know can I jump in here or can I ask a question or I'd check in with students to see how it was going.

Annie's reflection on power dynamics within her institution and her ability to recognize and challenge power imbalances shone through in her narrative. Her statement, "I wasn't afraid to have those hard conversations," showcased her determination to explicitly and intentionally use her power to effect transformative change.

Annie's emphasis on building connections with students and her regret over not engaging more deeply with parents stood out; she advocated for democratic schooling. She acknowledged, "So honestly, if I had to do it again, I would do better with the parent piece." However, her earnest efforts, such as trying "to know every student's name," underscored her dedication to creating an environment where students feel seen and heard. She stated:

> I tried to know every student's name. It's a big task in a school of 700 and I didn't always get it. But I tried to. Students would be funny. I always did bus duty and so they'd come off the bus and If I, I would greet them my name and if I didn't know their name I would say "remind me of your name", and some students would be like, "I told you this three times this week" and I'd be like, "I know, but I'm trying." So just that piece of like them at least knowing that you're trying to remember is also important.

Other actions like involving students and staff in decision making and her hands-on approach to teaching further amplified this commitment. Although like decision-making efforts highlighted in Melanie's and Shanice's interviews, such actions by NC leaders may be (in part at least) guided by statute and policy requirements.

As with Crystal's interview, several systemic factors acting as barriers or facilitators could be discerned. Systemic factors acting as barriers in Annie's school included resource allocation, socioeconomic disparities, and disciplinary concerns. Factors in Annie's experience acting as facilitators to change included district support, autonomy in decision making, and having a collective or team approach to supporting students.

Annie mentioned the need to advocate for additional licenses, which suggested resources were not always readily available or distributed based on need. This can be a significant barrier, as it might mean schools must constantly push for the resources they require. Also, Annie highlighted their district was considered high wealth, but her school supported most students identified in NC school report cards as economically disadvantaged. This distinction points to socioeconomic disparities affecting resources and overall school culture. Annie did note other challenges with supporting families when she shared some parents have "fears around schooling" or negative associations with education. Such parent mindsets and the school's "significant number of behavior referrals on a weekly basis" may have negatively contributed to the school's culture and could divert attention and resources away from educational goals.

Despite the challenges of resource allocation, Annie noted her district was "extremely supportive." When the school had a genuine need and could substantiate it, the district would find the required funding. The district provided the overarching goals, but Annie's school had the "ability and autonomy to decide" the specific steps and strategies they would employ to reach these goals.

Due to Annie's coaching approach and willingness to have tough conversations, she could be seen as a facilitator. Additionally, Annie's efforts to be in 5–10 different classrooms a week, to make herself visible to teachers and students, helped to drive the message staff and

students were working as a collective toward a common goal. This approach helped her have those difficult conversations with teachers without singling them out. Annie shared:

> We would have to have very realistic conversations with people. And I think that one of the things that would always stand out to people that they would say about me is that I don't sugarcoat things, but I also don't make you feel bad about it. [I may say something like,] "so like we're just gonna look at the data. I was in your classroom and you called only on females the entire time . . . . So let's talk about that . . . pattern that you're doing all the time. Is that because the boys in your class maybe have some behavior issues that we need to address? What is the reason for [you only calling on female students]?" . . . . And so I wasn't afraid to have those hard conversations with people whenever I needed to. And I think that that lent itself to sort of an understanding of "we're all working on this together."

Annie's method has fostered an environment of growth, accountability, and support. Ultimately, Annie's "all hands-on deck approach to intervention" even included her teaching students directly coupled with her role as a school administrator further helps to demonstrate a collective effort to address academic challenges head-on.

Teresa's Push for Cultural Shifts. Teresa was a principal in the Piedmont Triad region who identified as a biracial—Native American and Black—woman with 26 years of experience in education. Teresa's school leadership experience was unique. She was the principal of a lab school. Statute § 116-239.5 provides details on lab schools in NC and § 116-239.5(b) specifically stated the mission of lab schools in NC. Teresa stated:

> The mission of a laboratory school shall be to improve student performance in local school administrative units with low-performing schools by providing an enhanced

> education program for students residing in those units and to provide exposure and training for teachers and principals to successfully address challenges existing in high-needs school settings. A laboratory school shall provide an opportunity for research, demonstration, student support, and expansion of the teaching experience and evaluation regarding management, teaching, and learning.

Lab schools are essentially public schools under the purview of a public-school unit wholly managed and whose curriculum is guided by a university. North Carolina's lab schools are meant to be partnerships between University of North Carolina (UNC) system schools and local districts leading to instructional and curricular innovations transforming a school designated as low performing, into one that no longer has such a designation. Lab schools were created by NC's General Assembly in 2016 who required the UNC Board of Governors to establish eight lab schools (modified in 2017 to nine) aimed at improving student performance in low-performing schools.

Regarding artifacts Teresa shared or described representing the school, Teresa pointed to a magnet with the slogan "we're learning together." Additionally, Teresa spoke of letters from students who wrote how they liked she was their principal and leader. She also discussed video clips of the students. She most emphasized the letters. Teresa shared:

> For me, I think the letters just kept me grounded in terms of this is why I do the work I do. You know, pictures of kids that were the most at risk. But then you see them like writing, making their own book like creating their own book and kids that were just terrified to read in front of others, or had real issues. But having our summer reading institutes there, in reading clinics, we did over the summer, you could see, like the kids, just their confidence levels going up. And so, it was amazing to see.

To Teresa, her students and meeting their needs were her purpose. She mentioned a focus on culture and shared she spent a lot of time making sure school was a place students and families felt welcomed, stating, “I think our families were happy to be there. Our kids love being in school.” To support a positive school’s culture, she focused on representation and building engagement by “making sure that classroom libraries looked like the kids that [they] served” or starting the school day with morning meetings (even during remote learning). However, due to the uniqueness of a lab school, Teresa struggled with external policy expectations and juggled with the state, school district, and university expectations.

As a district principal, Teresa oversaw “transitioning a school to a laboratory school for a university.” More importantly, she had the task of “retaining at least 70% of the population from the traditional school.” Teresa also mentioned as part of being a lab school, she was also tasked with hiring an entire staff, though the school was not a new school. This suggests many educators may have been displaced because of the school’s change to a lab school.

Though some rehiring of the previous staff was possible, Teresa mentioned only elective teachers (i.e., noncore subject teaching educators) could be rehired. Although up for the challenge of running the lab school, Teresa expressed concerns about the lack of diversity among the teaching staff, hinting at a potential disconnect between the teachers and the students’ backgrounds. This challenge was exacerbated by hiring decisions influenced by affiliations with specific universities. Teresa noted:

> I think we struggled a little bit with maintaining a diverse staff. And so I think I think it would have been more impactful to have kids see people that look like them . . . I was part of the hiring team [but] I was not in charge of the hiring. [The one in charge] was [a director at the University]. [There] were often times where I felt like there were very

> qualified candidates and well versed, well educated, but I felt [that some candidates] were passed over. If you went to [the university], or [from the area where the university was located], you kind of had a little bit of a leg up, even though the school was not close to the university. The school was in the inner city. [The university] was rural. But we taught inner city kids and served inner city families. [Because of that] I think sometimes some of our teachers struggled with how to make connections with some of our kids.

Teresa went on to clarify representation and connections with students were hindered by how the diversity of the staff did not look like the diversity of students, and the experiences of the staff who were often candidates from the university did not connect to the experiences and lifestyles of the students.

Though Teresa faced teacher recruitment and retention struggles, she shared how excited everyone was the first year the school became a lab school. Although it was a difficult year, it was a year of growth. She said, "the first year was probably the toughest; . . . the first year we grew the most for the kids." Despite external pressure, Teresa shared, "the energy was high. We were excited about having a new school . . . [it] was very wraparound loving." The newness of the school and the support of the university promised innovation and change. Yet, the feeling of innovation passed. Teresa shared, "Then, Year 2 and 3, it started to feel like a regular traditional school. It didn't feel like a lab. It didn't feel like [something] different was happening [at the school]." More struggles manifested when, after the first year, student recruitment became a concern. Although the first-year recruitment was completed in partnership with the school district, by the second year, Teresa shared, "Because [the school] wasn't zoned as part of the district, we had to go out and market the school that spent a lot of time as a marketing principal." Teresa shared she both administered and marketed but spent more time than expected with

marketing. Teresa expressed she lived in the private and public charter world but with the state and district expectations of a traditional public school.

Throughout her tenure, Teresa advocated for her students and families. Her actions to support families and her promotion of student letters and voice (from videos and images) suggest Teresa exhibited a dedication for equity and sought to argue for the democratization of schooling. Also, Teresa's support of families led her to advocate for representation across library books and encouraged the university to do the same with representation across the staff. In these actions, Teresa exhibited a disposition toward finding balance and affecting change by identifying and addressing disparities (representation) in school communities and reflection on marginalized groups.

Summary. Shields (2011, 2018) stressed the development of new knowledge structures through introspection and critique of systems perpetuating inequity, leading to innovative solutions. For transformative leadership, acknowledging power and privilege is essential to deconstruction and reconstruction (Burns, 1978; Shields, 2011). A TL needs to understand all elements they might change or eliminate and must have the bravery to act. This understanding stems from introspection, critical reflection, and analyzing current systems. For Melanie, she reflected on her students with disabilities and changed how teachers operated and collaborated. For Shanice, introspection was set on prioritized voice and "never [wanting] to be a dictator." For Crystal, it was about strengthening community, providing access, and challenging school labeling to prioritize student potential. For Annie, it was having difficult conversations to support students. Finally, for Teresa, it was about being introspective of racial disparities and hiring practices.

Across five leadership interviews, NC education leaders exhibited a mandate for equity by displaying a willingness to question and challenge beliefs, to gather and analyze data, and to engage with the community. In their advocacy for families, in efforts to meet students' needs, to engage parents, and to seek voice from all stakeholders when it came to decision-making, interviewed leaders exhibited a recognition of their own power and potential for rule-bending. Because power distribution was primarily explored in response to a desire to restore the voices of teachers, parents, and students, the tenet on democratic schooling appeared to be the most reflected among leaders after their mandate for change. The extent to which arguing for democracy is a common disposition across leaders was unclear, or if it was in part due to external pressures to follow guidance on policy or statute.

Overall, although each leader exhibited introspection with some critical reflection on current systems, not all reflections were necessarily met with action producing change. This suggests NC leaders display TL traits, but there is a need to go beyond a desire, willingness, or receptivity for change to an ability to recognize and challenge power imbalances. This requires leaders use their power explicitly and intentionally to transform schools, to push back, and use one's power, knowledge, and dedication to create conditions under which students can learn freely and fairly to develop their own concepts, opinions, and self-identity. One leader, Crystal, appeared to come close. With the support of the community, she used her power to push back against state takeover, and yet, upon her return nearly a decade later, that transformative approach did not translate into a permanent transformation of the school.

Overall Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

In the quantitative phase of the research, several insights about the perceptions of NC school leaders emerged. A significant majority, nearly 90%, expressed a readiness to usher in

change. However, this enthusiasm was juxtaposed with an inflated self-perception concerning their dedication to equity. Additionally, sentiments related to school environments and structures were found to be racialized. Also, White NC school leaders perceived themselves as lacking influential capacities within their roles. Furthermore, when diving deeper into systemic barriers and facilitators, prejudice and privilege were identified as major obstacles, and district or community support, especially in areas of finance and staffing, emerged as facilitators to change.

SBE's documentation revealed a leadership grappling with the evolving needs of educational transformation. There were frequent revisions to critical documents, signaling the lack of consensus. However, amid these challenges, there appeared a budding acknowledgment of the importance of inclusivity and diversity in education. Lived experiences interviews illuminated systemic barriers, with segregation standing out prominently. The very structure of schools, particularly when it came to tracking for academic achievement or behavioral issues, often led to deepened segregation. Attempts to mitigate these barriers, like integrating schools or introducing diverse courses, were also highlighted. The narratives of NC education leaders underscored a firm commitment to equity. Most exhibited introspection and acknowledged the power they wielded. Yet, there was a gap between this recognition and the implementation of transformative actions, emphasizing the need for leaders to challenge entrenched power imbalances actively.

Themes emerging from the study include a disparity between intent and action, undercurrents of racialized perceptions, and the challenge of power dynamics. The willingness for NC educators to usher in change was evident across both phases of the research. However, there remains a marked discrepancy between this intent and actual transformative practices. Additionally, the research highlighted how racial biases and perceptions significantly influenced

both the leadership's outlook and the operational structures within NC schools. Finally, genuine educational transformation in NC necessitates not just the acknowledgment of existing power dynamics but an active and proactive challenge against them.

The educational milieu in North Carolina is at a crossroads. There is a palpable desire for change, especially in fostering inclusivity and equity. However, systemic challenges, deeply rooted in racial biases and entrenched power dynamics, stand as formidable barriers. The future of education in NC may hinge upon bridging the gap between intent and action, guided by a genuine commitment to equity.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

In the landmark *Leandro v. State of North Carolina* (1997) case, the North Carolina (NC) Court mandated every child's constitutional right to a sound basic education, emphasizing the imperative of educational equity. Yet, despite such a mandate, NC has continued to grapple with significant opportunity gaps, notably among students of color and those students categorized as educationally disadvantaged. These disparities are not merely surface manifestations but indicate deeper systemic issues.

Bertocchi (2015, 2016) provided research on the export and selling of bodies and the generational imprisonment of enslaved bodies experienced during colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade. Bertocchi's research addressed the long-term effects of slavery on racial inequality and provided longitudinal maps that shed light on the relationship between slavery exports, colonialism, and current economic inequalities. In essence, there have been and continue to be long-term effects of slavery, largely so on human capital accumulation. Schultz (1993) wrote human capital is complex, stating it "enhances individual productivity" and "invents new forms of physical capital" (p. 13). With the former influencing the latter, "[human capital] is the key to economic progress" (Schultz, 1993, p. 13). Human capital includes factors like education, skills, and health. It has a significant influence on an individual's economic productivity and earnings potential.

A handful of empires influenced human capital on a massive global scale, as was the case with colonialism and slavery. With laws, policies, and practices restricting and prohibiting the rights of enslaved persons over generations, and subsequent laws creating racial hierarchies and prohibiting the civil liberties of descendants of freed persons, slavery and colonial practices

deprived the enslaved and their descendants of access to education, skill development, and healthcare, thus ensuring sustained inequities. This assessment has not considered the exploitation of natural resources by colonial powers, the division of unified tribes through artificial border creation, and a self-serving legacy of economic systems created and taught to the colonized.

The disparities in human capital and institutional setups created by slavery and colonialism have manifested in contemporary economic inequalities. Regions and racial groups that suffered the most during the colonial era and slave trade have often remained economically disadvantaged. The disparities extend to income, wealth, health outcomes, educational attainment, and more. Arguably, the United States was itself a colony at first. However, the United States has participated in the import and enslavement of Black bodies over generations. Thus, the United States has contributed to disparities existing in countries of export and to its own disparities as a country that imported and dehumanized Black bodies. As one of the founding states to have formed the modern-day United States, NC has continued to experience opportunity gaps among its White and Black student populations, making the factors contributing or causing these gaps systemic.

Summary of the Study

To combat systemic concerns, the NC State Board of Education (SBE) identified seven measures to monitor a goal to eliminate opportunity gaps. The measures included aspects of school climate like discipline, and other factors such as access to educators of color. Measures like discipline or academic performance provided insight into the impact of systemic factors on schools, but such factors have not necessarily addressed root causes. To delve deeper into this

issue, I employed a mixed-methods sequential explanatory study, drawing from transformative leadership theory (TLT) and critical race theory (CRT).

Through surveys, interviews, and document analysis, I sought to identify the leadership dispositions and systemic factors perpetuating these educational inequities in NC. This study's research questions were:

1. What dispositional factors appear as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in NC? To what extent are the dispositional factors racialized?
2. What systemic factors appear as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in NC? To what extent are the systemic factors racialized?
3. What themes emerge from listening to the voices of leaders of LP schools that relate to dispositional and systemic factors?
4. From the research findings, what strategic policy recommendations emerge to enhance NC's progress toward educational transformation?

I employed a mixed-methods, sequential explanatory methodology for this research, focusing on the perceptions and actions of NC school leaders within the space of educational equity. The quantitative data revealed a dichotomy between leaders' perceived readiness for change and their self-perception concerning equity dedication. These quantitative findings were supported by the qualitative data, wherein the lived experiences of NC graduates pointed to systemic barriers like access and racism and the education leader interviews pointed to the racialized nature of education and education leadership in NC. Additionally, a document analysis of SBE's documentation underscored the willingness (for some) and ongoing and racialized struggle leaders have had in reaching a consensus about transformative action. These themes emerging from the findings, such as a misalignment between leadership intent and action,

racialized perceptions, and power dynamics, illuminated the deeper systemic challenges in NC's educational landscape.

Existing Dispositional Factors Influencing NC Leaders

In Research Questions 1 and 3, I sought to ascertain the themes emerging when exploring the dispositional factors appearing as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in NC and the extent to which these dispositional factors might be racialized. Existing dispositional factors that act as barriers or facilitators to change in NC leaders were examined across five subscales of the study's survey. These were (a) willingness (Q19), (b) dedication to equitable change (Q21), (c) distributions of power (Q22), (d) democratized schooling (Q23), and (e) finding balance (Q24). Findings from these subscales showed many NC school leaders perceived themselves as exceedingly willing (with nearly 90% agreement) to implement change. Also, self-perceptions of dedication to equity were inflated among NC school leaders, and school leaders of color were more likely to recommend their school to friends and family.

I discovered perceived influence was correlated to action and White NC school leaders were less likely to perceive themselves as having influence. NC school leaders who prioritized and practiced involving a diverse representation in decision-making processes were also likely to employ diverse strategies to build strong relationships among staff and students. Additionally, leaders who prioritized and practiced involving a diverse representation in decision-making processes indicated having a higher agreement percentage to being considerate to the needs of every subgroup in their schools. Overall, NC leaders displayed willingness or receptivity for change and the dominant transformative leader (TL) characteristic displayed is an ability to recognize and challenge power imbalances.

For both the quantitative and qualitative findings, I sought to gauge school leaders' dispositions toward change. The findings provided a story of a noticeable divide between the recognition of the need for change and the actionable steps taken to implement change. The self-reported dispositions from the study's survey highlighted an awareness and willingness among school leaders. One dispositional tendency proved to be more prominent in NC leaders: the democratization of schooling. The comparable TLT tenet of emancipation, democracy, inclusion, and equity indicates a TL embodying democratic dispositions that offers conditions in which students can learn freely and fairly to develop their own concepts, opinions, and self-identity, where the voices of stakeholders are restored and a knowledge of equity is used to overcome deficit thinking, to share power, and to ensure socially just classroom practices.

Existing Systemic Factors Influencing NC Leaders

In Research Questions 2 and 3, I sought to ascertain the themes emerging when exploring the systemic factors that appear as barriers or facilitators to administrators in LP schools in NC and the extent to which these factors might be racialized. Existing systemic factors acting as barriers or facilitators to change in NC leaders were examined across three subscales of the study's survey. These subscales included educational supports, including (a) funding (Q20), (b) the pervasiveness of racism (Q25), and (c) racialized school transformation (Q26). Based on the results, it appeared systemic factors acting as barriers to change included prejudice and privilege. Those acting as facilitators to change included district or community support in areas such as finance, staffing, and the school environment.

Systemic and stubborn factors highlighted in the findings involved material educational supports and racial disparities. The adequacy of the school facility was a concern for many, but was influenced by the leader's perceived support on staffing or budget support. When

considering staff retention rates across the nation after the COVID-19 global pandemic, historical concerns over teacher shortages in NC (WestEd, 2019), and the increasing percent of educators stating they plan to leave the profession based on Teacher Working Conditions Survey results between 2020 and 2022, educational supports and school facilities will continue to become a major concern.

SBE's documentation revealed a leadership grappling with the evolving needs of educational transformation. For example, meeting minutes revealed frequent revisions on critical documents, signaling the lack of consensus. However, amid these challenges, I found a budding acknowledgment of the importance of inclusivity and diversity in education.

Lived experiences interviews illuminated systemic barriers, with segregation standing out prominently. The very structure of schools, particularly when it came to tracking for academic achievement or behavioral issues, often led to deepened segregation. Attempts to mitigate these barriers, like integrating schools or introducing diverse courses, were also highlighted in the results. The narratives of NC education leaders underscored a firm commitment to equity. Most interviewees exhibited introspection and acknowledged the power they wielded. However, there was a gap between this recognition and the implementation of transformative actions, emphasizing the need for leaders to challenge entrenched power imbalances actively.

Overall Themes and Conclusions

Themes emerging from the study included a disparity between intent and action, undercurrents of racialized perceptions, and the challenge of power dynamics. The willingness for NC educators to usher in change was evident across both phases of the research. However, there remained a marked discrepancy between this intent and actual transformative practices. Additionally, the research highlighted racial biases and perceptions. Finally, genuine educational

transformation in NC necessitates the acknowledgment of existing power dynamics and an active and proactive challenge against them.

The educational milieu in NC is at a crossroads. There is a palpable desire for change, especially in fostering inclusivity and equity. However, systemic challenges, deeply rooted in racial biases and power distributions, stand as formidable barriers. The future of education in NC may hinge upon bridging the gap between intent and action, guided by an increased commitment to equity.

Strategic Policy Recommendations

The fourth and final research question sought a response from findings regarding the strategic policy recommendations that may enhance NC's progress toward educational transformation. NC leader dispositions and challenges in implementing transformative change suggested underlying systemic issues are at fault. The study's overall findings suggested the NC public education system has been experiencing increasing racialized power dynamics for years have gone unresolved. The findings also indicated awareness does not translate to the presence of action (i.e., intent does not equate to practice). Also, historical patterns suggested left unchecked and unresolved, the struggle against systemic inequity will continue, and students will bear the consequences.

The future of NC education hinges not only on recognizing its transformative tendencies and its historical and racialized challenges, but also on actively seeking and implementing solutions that push the boundaries of traditional educational norms to create an equitable learning environment for all students. Though NC public education leaders appear to be ready for deep equitable change, change has remained at a stalemate driven by politics and policy. For example, the state has established clear guidelines for an improvement plan that can support all schools

provided the necessary resources and funding are available to the Department of Public Instruction and to local education agencies. Specific components listed within the *Leandro* remedial plan, aligned to Goal I, to eliminate opportunity gaps, include the fulfillment of the following conditions:

- Having a well prepared, high quality, and supported teacher in every classroom,
- Establishing a finance system that provides adequate, equitable, and efficient resources.
- Aiding turnaround functions that provides necessary support to LP schools and districts,
- Having a system of early education that provides access to high-quality prekindergarten and other early childhood learning opportunities,
- Establish an assessment and accountability system that reliably assesses multiple measures of student performance, and
- Set an alignment of high school to postsecondary and career expectations for all students. (Superior Court Division 95-CVS-1158, 2021)

Although institutions, agencies, and groups of people have placed time, energy, and hours into identifying exact ways to help support NC public education, change readiness was not explicitly addressed and was as such not included in the pathway to transformation. Components highlighted may yield the results for deep meaningful and equitable change in NC education, but the reality is internal and external factors and pushback as described in the document analysis and within leadership interview responses have disrupted movement toward change.

Taking into consideration (a) states (excluding the District of Columbia and Hawaii) have statutory provisions related to outlining the authority of local school boards, (b) NC conditions

for local board elections are based on age (at least 21 years), location (residing within the county), and incarceration history, and (c) since 1955, "all powers and duties conferred and imposed by law respecting public schools . . . are conferred and imposed upon local boards of education [who] shall have general control and supervision of all matters pertaining to the public schools . . . [and] shall enforce the school law" (§ 115C-36), decision makers enter the decision-making space at varying levels of TL dispositions. A policy change encourages implementation and operationalization of TL characteristics in local school board leaders and among school leaders supporting the state's ongoing efforts in educational transformation.

Discussion

> We need to initiate a national dialogue about what education is, what it should do, and where it can be most productively advanced.
>
> —Goodlad, 1979

Humans are born and then they learn. Education is developed over the years they grow, the months they explore, the days they dream, and the minutes it takes for them to process the world around them—meaning students do not enter the world of formal education lacking knowledge. Students are not automatons waiting to be programmed for their purpose, let alone empty vessels waiting to be filled or a lump of clay waiting to be molded. Students may enter school with eyes alight with curiosity but let us not mistake curiosity for ignorance. They enter school with their own culture, social norms, and assumptions about how the world works. And yet, for years, educators have used a banking system of education (Freire, 1970/2005). Educators have instructed students as though they are empty containers or receptacles to be filled by the teacher. This does not suggest teachers do not offer students meaningful opportunities for learning or have nothing critical to offer in the education of students. Simply, theirs is not the

only knowledge students have grown up with, explored, dreamt about, or processed before entering the school building.

The assumption all receptacles (i.e., students) can be filled suggests no receptacle begins school with enough knowledge to be quantified as meaningful. If formal education is the only avenue for knowledge, then a banking mindset or disposition rejects the possibility students can possess meaningful knowledge outside of school, which assumes prior to any formal education, students enter the learning space without knowledge. If no students begin with meaningful information before entering the educational system, then effectively, all students begin as equals and, as such, can be instructed equally. As does the achievement gap, this concept of sameness or equal beginnings is a deficit-based incongruity discounting the impact of race, racism, and socioeconomic disparities (Ladson-Billings, 2016). This approach of sameness or an assumption all students share the same starting point and are offered the same opportunities in life runs the risk of blaming the victim (i.e., placing the blame of educational performance on the student or groups of students failing to achieve alongside their peers; Ryan, 1976).

Current accountability systems also support the idea of sameness. How people see themselves (either through the individual lens or as a society) affects their reality (Hall, 1996). Consequently, how educators perceive students influences how they define or measure student success and vice versa. If tools are developed with a particular type or color of student in mind, then reasonably they are more effective at measuring only that type and color, thus questioning the validity of tools. The existence of school performance grading through a combination of assessments and school labeling assumes

- consent exists around what constitutes a good education,

- consent exists as to what knowledge is meaningful, important or necessary to succeed, and
- knowledge meaningful, important, or necessary can only be obtained through formal education.

School performance grades also place decisions regarding the hierarchy of knowledge in the same hands as those who prescribe which measurements are needed to show success and how they are to be calculated. The hierarchy begins with an assumption there is acceptable knowledge, which is tested and can only be disseminated to students by schools, and then there is the rest. Even the knowledge provided by schools can be partitioned into (a) best knowledge, which leads a student to be college and career ready; (b) better knowledge, which leads a student to achieve grade-level proficiency, and (c) good knowledge, which can prepare students to pursue an approved vocation.

With a banking mindset, educators uphold a system that (a) maintains the status quo by not "changing the consciousness of the oppressed," (b) is riddled with "contradictions," and (c) will "never propose to students that they critically consider reality" (Freire, 2014, pp. 2–3). Education becomes a measured act—mechanical movements between "depositories" (students) and "the depositor" (the teacher; Freire, 2015, p. 1) devoid of human experience. One cannot eliminate the human experience from schooling. In fact, the only way to achieve educational transformation that leads to liberation is by directly addressing the human experience and having a deeper commitment to human rights (Goodlad, 1984; McFarland, 2015) and by turning an introspective eye on human existence from genesis to modernity.

With introspection and critical discourse (Freire, 1970/2005; Levinson, 2011) comes socially just transformation and, ultimately, emancipation (Freire, 2015). Without a social justice

mindset, there is a potential for educators to disregard or ignore student's funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2007; Moll et al., 1992). Indeed, by maintaining banking habits, it will be difficult to find or develop in school leaders the most impactful dispositions (Fortner et al., 2021; Shields, 2010, 2020) and receptivity (Frahm & Brown, 2007; Pettigrew et al., 2001) necessary for equitable change. Scholars have argued maintaining banking habits challenges the ability to find or develop school leaders. As Caliendo (2014) described, the United States is a political democracy and makes promises of success to each of its citizens.

On the heels of its independence, the nation's forefathers set out to create a "more perfect union" fostering justice, peace, and liberty for its people (U.S. Constitution, Preamble, 1787). Born out of democratic values, the United States would see education as a "complex need to be met by society" (Goodlad, 1979, p. 15) and "the true corrective of abuses of constitutional power" (Jefferson, 1820, para. 1). Education is how one discovers truth through historical context (Au, 2014), attains knowledge, passes down ideology (Entwistle, 2009; Foucault, 1972/1980), and practices conformity or freedom (Freire, 1970/2005; Shaull, 2005). Yet, within this same democratic nation, there exists the value of capitalism. Caliendo (2014) described capitalism as a system accepting economic inequality as part of its function. Indeed, persistent, and disproportionate access to wealth and power has been endemic throughout U.S. history, and the distribution of debt, which can materialize itself as generational poverty often found within neighborhoods of low-performing schools, is a "cycle of disadvantage" and a "window into economic and radical inequality" (Caliendo, 2014, p. 51). This window, with the COVID-19 global pandemic, has exacerbated inequities among Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) and low-income families (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2020).

The Inevitability of Inequality

What makes the process of addressing problems of education so complex is the system does not operate in isolation. People live in a larger global society whose increasing interconnectivity has developed a global consciousness among people resulting in the adoption of a call for action. At the time of this study, this call came in the form of 17 goals, adopted by United Nations members in 2015, as sustainable development goals that recognize addressing human rights and poverty must align to matters of education and equity.

Globalization is "a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions" (Held et al., 1999 as cited by Litz, 2011, p. 47). Globalization results in economic integrations (Mundy & Manion, 2014) that should, in theory, unite society, leading to "heightened levels of internationalization" (Held et al., 1999, p. 5). A globalist mindset posits together, people are better; the new whole—created from interactions of people and cultures—is greater than its parts, than the very people and cultures that make it up. This definition addresses unity, but it alludes to loss—a loss or, at the very least, the reduced importance or need for individual selves or individual nation-selves.

Tikly (2001) suggested three approaches to globalization; each approach yields different interpretations as to its effects. First is the theoretical approach to globalization (Litz, 2011), which yields the hyperglobalist approach. Hyperglobalists, also known as globalists, perceive globalization in terms of loss—the loss of sovereignty and the demise of the nation state (Held & McGrew, 2007; Ohmae, 1995; Strange, 1996; Tikly, 2001). The second approach—the *sceptical* (or skeptical) approach—is a historical interpretation to globalization "questions whether or not there is uniqueness in the current trends of global relations" (Litz, 2011, p. 47). This approach appears to be neutral learning toward the negative about globalization. This neutral state is due to

the *sceptical* claim that although the nation state is stronger now than ever before, people are more polarized and have weaker trading blocs (Held et al., 1999; Tikly, 2001). The third approach is an institutional interpretation (Litz, 2011) called the transformationalist approach, of which components are applied as a lens to consequences of educational inequity.

The transformationalist approach combines the hyperglobalist and *sceptical* approaches and suggests globalization is complex with both positive and negative aspects. More specifically, Tikly (2001) wrote, "[the transformationalist sees] globalization as an historically contingent process replete with contradictions" (p. 154), and not everyone absolutely benefits from globalization. Instead, "some states, societies and communities are becoming increasingly enmeshed in the global order while others are becoming increasingly marginalized" (Tikly, 2011, p. 48). Thompson (2015) suggested transformationalists see the interconnectedness and flow of culture as a two-way exchange between developed and developing worlds.

Researchers (Beck, 1992, 2009) have identified detraditionalization, cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 1983), and a global risk consciousness (Beck, 1992) as consequences of this process. Detraditionalization signifies a contrast to traditional ideas or a transformation through questioning of one's traditional beliefs. Cultural hybridity (Bhabha, 1983) refers to the intermingling and or blending of elements of diverse cultures. Global risk consciousness embeds complex moral and political factors of responsibility to the global space to address global risks (Beck, 2009).

The critical transformationalist, which aligns to a newer interpretation to globalization known as the deconstructivist or global-revisionist approach (Litz, 2011), digs a little deeper and explores the impact of globalization from a human rights approach. Critical transformationalism calls for critical consciousness (Freire, 1974/2005) and rejects oppressive, imperialistic ideals

from industrial nations do more to serve the propagation of industry and capitalism rather than focus on people (Ahmad, 2004). Exchanges benefit the one and not the other benefit no one; identities and local cultures do not need to be lost or "swallowed by western cultures" (Thompson, 2015, para. 2) for humans to connect and succeed together. Instead, the ways in which people integrate has the potential to create new and collective consciousness.

As a historically contingent process, globalization must be represented in connection to colonial experiences and imperialistic exploitations of nations. According to Bhabha's (1994) postcolonial theory—a critical framework used to inform components of this study—people are the sum of their histories with identities irreparably linked to stereotypes based on those histories. Stereotypes are at the heart of existing prejudices and help validate cultural hierarchies and social inequities. Furthermore, Bhabha (1983) wrote both the subjectivity and ambivalence of stereotypes "gives the colonial stereotype its currency: ensures its repeatability in changing historical and discursive conjunctures; informs its strategies of individuation and marginalization [as well as] produces an effect of probabilistic truth and predictability" (p. 18). This suggests from the postcolonial perspective, a globalized world continuing to place profit and the values of wealthier nations ahead of the human experience is one that still carries with it the prejudices of the past, maintaining its divisions and historical behaviors of oppression. Stereotyping reinforces Western dominance and ideologies not simply around identity, but of one's perceptions on knowledge; what knowledge dominates other knowledge. People now find themselves in a place where their ideologies are negatively impacting their ability to be socially emancipated thanks in part to the ambivalence of stereotypes (Bhabha, 1994; Freire, 1970/2005).

One cannot only explore the Western perspective to globalization, because doing so would yield vastly different conclusions to a postcolonial critique. As Tikly (2001) wrote, "a

postcolonial critique draws attention to the transnational aspects of globalization and of social inequalities and seeks to highlight forms of resistance to Western global hegemony as they have manifested themselves in education" (p. 152). The transatlantic slave trade was a trade route connecting cultures, and led to the forced integration of thousands of Africans to various Western colonies across the globe. It was ultimately the direct cause of the pan-African diaspora. This phenomenon appeared to positively spin the generational enslavement and dehumanization of a people. The transatlantic slave trade promoted and therefore benefited Western hegemony and influenced while stripping away the culture, along with stunting the economic development and humanity of what westerners have categorized as developing nations.

Hegemonies like education have influence and can support society's preservation of ideals, good or bad, over generations. Freire (1970/2005) described the educational system as relying on a banking system that maintains the status quo. Schooling focused on a banking system where students simply exist to receive the information deposited to them is one breeding ideology rather than supporting liberatory thought. It creates in education inevitability to inequality where social inequities are perpetuated, and the eradication of poverty is not supported.

Education is an institution used to advance cultural ideologies that can either be employed to reinforce one's perceived pathologies of one another, or to emancipate people from the trappings of stereotypes they have held since colonialism (Entwistle, 2009; Foucault, 1972/1980; Freire, 1970/2005; Mayo, 2014). In the care of nonequity minded leaders, education moves beyond conformity to a deliberate subjugation of groups of people. Therefore, not only is knowledge and understanding of globalization and its impact important, but also school leaders

"adapt to and cope with the large-scale changes that will inevitably be thrust upon them" (Litz, 2011, p. 49).

A globalization process focuses on industry and capitalism and benefits the past and present colonizer while ignoring the needs of the descendants of the colonized. This means a system operating by color and passport rather than the person to which that color or passport belongs to risks the perpetuation of systems of inequity. There are severe outcomes to this process, such as (a) 54% of African Americans graduate from high school compared to 75% of White and Asian students; (b) as a nation, the United States is averaging one school shooting per week (Farrell, 2015); and (c) nearly 20% of NC public K–12 schools has been designated low-performing schools, as experienced in U.S. schools.

As devastating as these data points are, they were all outcomes before the COVID-19 global pandemic. The pandemic disrupted the educational journey of millions of U.S. citizens with the overhaul of the learning framework through the implementation of remote learning, in which this overhaul widened opportunity gaps and exacerbated inequities among BIPOC and low-income families (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2020).

Dominance, Social Justice, and Factors Impacting Schooling

The epistemological problem people face as a postcolonial society is determining whose truth is applied in context to a situation. One may wonder whose perspective guides the narrative. In the context of race, there exists two basic factions: the dominant and the dominated. As with globalization, a critical lens to addressing concerns of society and education permits one to look beyond dominant ideology, to be introspective, and to engage in a balanced exploration of truth (Au, 2014; Bhabha, 1994).

In the United States, it has been widely accepted, albeit contended by some, White people are both the majority and the dominant group and all other minority groups are the dominated. Wirth (1941), a leading urban sociologist of his time, defined a minority in U.S. society as "those who because of physical or social and cultural differences receive differential treatment . . . [and who] characteristically are held in lower esteem, are debarred from certain opportunities, or are excluded from full participation in our national life" (p. 415). The definition of minority applied in this paper was redefined as those who, because of racial and cultural differences, have been mistreated within the larger U.S. society and exist in collective oppression and discrimination.

If colonial stereotypes are maintained in a postcolonial world, then the normalization of White privilege or supremacy is a condition of colonialism perpetuated by those in power through institutions or hegemonies like education. Thus, to protect one's colonial interests (e.g., privilege and power), the advancement of racial equality can only be achieved if it is in the interest of the dominant. The interests of racial equality desired by minorities are only achieved or accommodated when it converges with those in the majority (i.e., White people; Bell, 1992). This ability to call equity and discrimination to question when one is in a more influential position—with respect to collective social, cultural, and economic status; wealth; capital; and access—is by definition a validation of their existing privilege and power.

Social justice refers to the moral right and fair treatment and behavior as it pertains to social and economic factors of a community. Walzer (1983/2008), an interpretivist theorist, defined processes and relationships within our "human society as a distributive community" (p. 43). A socially just society is one defined by transcendental plurality (Dworkin, 2000; Perry, 2015; Rawls, 1973; Witcher, 2013) and principals of distribution (Miller, 2001). According to Witcher (2013), social justice holds true to the following two tenets: complex equality and

cultural recognition. Regarding the first, a misrepresentation of complex equality is in a "distributive injustice [that] results in exploitation, economic marginalization into low paid, undesirable work (or unemployment) and deprivation" (Witcher, 2013, p. 57). With respect to the latter, an absence of cultural recognition or cultural obscurity, "can lead to cultural domination, lack of representation, voice, and disrespect. [Cultural recognition is a] value of difference" (Witcher, 2013, p. 57).

A presence of transcendent pluralism, complex equality, and cultural recognition in a diverse society and, by extension, in schools, transforms humanity in a manner leading to the emergence and advancement of human dignity. Such an advancement has the potential to yield a society where the devaluation, marginalization, and exploitation of the other not standard from the colonizer's perspective is eliminated. A school leader who understands (i.e., has knowledge) concepts of equity and social justice, may recognize the impact of structural racism within the community. Leaders with a mandate for equity may also recognize factors that impact opportunity gaps and have a willingness to intentionally advance equity and social justice. A leader willing to advance equity may have a commitment to it and can use these impactful dispositions for the good of students and ultimately, the good of humanity. Shields (2020) addressed this concept of dispositions through transformative leadership theory (TLT).

Shame, Race Evasiveness, and Power

Ferguson et al. (2000) stated unwanted identities are "causal antecedents to shame" (p. 136) and shame is linked to a feeling of unworthiness or in the context of education, of inferiority. Taking into account Crystal's negative experience with the threat of state takeover, Annie's school improvement driven approach to escape a low performance school listing (i.e., "When I was first at the school, we were a D school (low performing) . . . and the year after I

left, it was removed from recurring low performing school"), and Teresa's embrace of the university's support to exit its performance designation, it appears school labeling resulting from accountability factors only perpetuate the ideology of supremacy and subsequent dynamic of colonized and colonizer seen in postcolonialism (Bhabha, 1983). These experiences provide further evidence of ways in which hegemonies (i.e., the education complex; Foucault, 1972/1980; Gramsci, 1971/2020), are used to perpetuate neoliberal ideology (as seen in with high stakes testing) and cultural hegemony (as seen in non-transformative leadership norms) sustain existing racial inequalities.

Leaders from both racial groups applied required NC school improvement practices, but leaders who identified as non-White (i.e., Shanice, Crystal, and Teresa) were more fixated on labeling and its impact on their students and community. For example, Shanice shared, "The outside world characterizes my school by a single letter grade, but that doesn't even factor into what I see when I look at my school. I see two letters which are IB." These interactions suggest unwanted identities (Ferguson et al., 2000) are attributed to non-White leaders in disenfranchised schools across NC.

Alternatively, White leaders shared other experiences. Melanie shared her school's B rating and her encouragement of collaboration in school meetings, while acknowledging a lack of growth despite the higher performance rating. Annie shared advocating for education resources for her "low wealth" students in a "high wealth" school district along with a list of instructional strategies removed the school from the recurring low-performance list. The non-White leaders did not ignore strategies for improvement; however, they appeared to be more professionally cognizant of how the community and the state perceived the school's labeling despite "graduating doctors, engineers, lawyers."

Although the lived experiences interview questions were derived from the school leader interview protocol, race and racism were not overtly addressed by school leaders; however, they were discussed by graduates from NC high schools. They used euphemism of race and racism like Title I, urban, suburban, poor, or color instead. Direct mentions of racial subgroups such as Black or Brown were shared in relation to providing a demographic breakdown of the schools. Only three school leaders directly identified racial subgroups, suggesting race evasiveness is a norm within more formal conversations about schools. For example, it took nearly the entire interview before interviewees had any overt discussions of race in school leader interviews. This suggests school and state leaders typically evade conversations on race and racism when discussing education.

Power is at the root of shame and race evasiveness. Education is a vehicle perpetuating modernity's ideals. Education also propagates ideology founded by the ideals of dominant cultures (Gramsci, 1971/2020). Dominance is linked to power and influence and therefore superiority. If someone or some group must be superior or dominant, then another must be inferior or subjugated. In NC, the SBE holds dominance as well as local boards. By statute, each of these levels of power requires school districts to align their strategic planning. Thus, state and district professionals voted in decision-making roles, and who are typically not educators, directly and indirectly perpetuate shame and race evasiveness.

Transformative Characteristics

In *Pedagogy of Hope*, Freire (2021) reflected on his experiences working in different cultural and educational contexts and engages in a dialogue with various philosophers, educators, and activists. He explored the challenges and possibilities of education as a liberating force, aiming to transform society and promote social justice. Freire emphasized the importance of

hope in the educational process, seeing it as a fundamental element for individuals to engage in *conscientização* (critical consciousness) and transform oppressive systems. Freire argued hope should not be passive optimism or blind faith but be grounded in critical thinking, dialogue, and collective action. Hope (Freire, 1974/2005, 2021) is intimately connected to a sense of agency and the belief that change is possible through collective efforts.

Regarding the leadership dispositions needed to implement Freire's pedagogy of hope, some key qualities and dispositions aligned with those in Shields (2011) tenets of TLT. These included but were not limited to a commitment to social justice, critical consciousness, facilitation of dialogue, and advocacy and activism. With respect to a commitment to social justice, this finding aligned to the transformative tenet, mandate for making change. In their commitment to social justice or mandate for change, leaders need to have a deep commitment to social justice and a clear understanding of the systemic injustices existing within educational contexts and society at large. They must be dedicated to challenging and dismantling oppressive structures.

As a tenet, a TL would possess a mandate for change and do so by identifying new approaches to address inequity, by applying constant questioning to lead to creative new approaches, and by maintaining an unwavering commitment to addressing inequity. A proclivity for critical consciousness suggests a leader would foster a culture of questioning, reflection, and analysis of social realities. It suggests a leader would support others in their own critical consciousness (i.e., helping students develop a deeper understanding of power dynamics and inequality). This finding appeared to align with the tenet to redistribute power within inequitable systems. In this tenet, a TL examines how power is used for good or ill; Shields (2020) acknowledged, "Pervasiveness and hegemony of power and privilege" (p. 2) reaches new

awareness of inequity, recognizes their own power and the potential for rule-bending, and uses that power explicitly and intentionally to transform inequitable systems.

A leader who facilitates dialogue has a disposition in which they create spaces for open and respectful dialogue, where diverse viewpoints are encouraged and multiple voices are heard. This includes the facilitation of conversations challenging assumptions, fostering understanding, and promoting transformative learning experiences. The tenet specific to emancipation, democracy, inclusion, and equity (Shields, 2011, 2020) pushes the TL to take responsibility for change. A TL's disposition would be to prioritize conditions under which students can learn freely and fairly to develop their own concepts, opinions, and self-identity. In so doing, a TL restores the voices of teachers, parents, and students, and uses their knowledge of equity to overcome deficit thinking. Finally, in advocacy and activism, leaders act as advocates for social change, both in educational settings and in the broader community. They work toward creating policies, practices, and initiatives that promote equity, justice, and humanization. Within the tenet to balance critique and promise, a TL understands the need to challenge current practices and as such takes action to do so. Furthermore, in pursuing the work of equitable change, the TL recognizes transformation involves pushback and moral courage.

The set of hope driven or transformative leadership dispositions explored within this study is not exhaustive. Additionally, the specific requirements may vary depending on the cultural, social, and educational contexts. However, if one is to assume TLT provides the framework to identify and subsequently create a pathway to develop a TL, then embodying these qualities can also contribute to the implementation of Freire's (2021) pedagogy of hope and the creation of transformative and empowering educational environments. Assuming willingness or a receptivity for critical change exists, the use of TLT and CRT components identified within

this study may support an effort to recognize and highlight the dispositions that dominate school systems and can therefore offer a first step toward the capacity development necessary for subsequent transformative change.

Transformation Is not Culture Neutral

As critical as transformative dispositional factors are to addressing inequities in education, one cannot explain the existence of low-performing schools without also addressing systemic factors affecting schools. One cannot provide holistic insights into an organization and develop a plan to support its efforts for change without a clearer understanding of the context and culture permitting the existence of such systems. Systemic factors to educational transformation are not as direct as one might imagine.

Oakes et al. (2006) shared reformers have historically focused on technical dimensions to obtain educational equity. These technical dimensions have focused on "rules, structures, practices and programs" (Oakes et al., 2006, p. 14) for systemic change, to tackle factors such as school assignments, resource allocations, capacity building protocols and academic programs. Public education is a vital public resource for every child regardless of race, religion, or status (Kirp, 1982; Noguera, 2003), and schools are "social welfare institutions" most especially in high poverty urban settings systemically suffering from "meager resources" and an absence of "genuine alternatives" (Noguera, 2003, pp. 5–6). Scheetz and Senge (2016) identified systemic tangible dimensions of inequity ranging from "class size, teacher preparation, curricular relevance and student opportunity" (p. 24).

What makes the identification of systemic factors to educational equity challenging is technical or more tangible factors fail to consider other social and economic factors that when ignored, make transformation difficult. Systemic factors to equitable schools must therefore

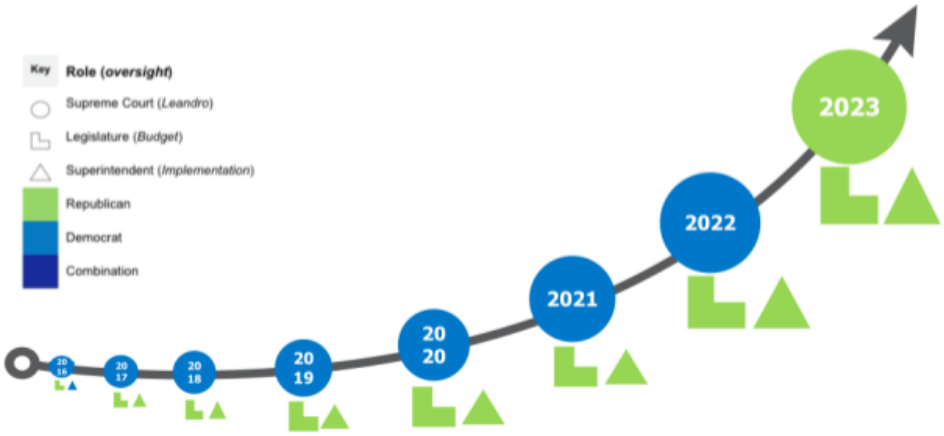
address social context (Noguera, 2003), one's ideas and beliefs about students' academic abilities and potential (Scheetz & Senge, 2016), and "cultural norms about race, merit, and schooling that underlie the status quo" (Oakes et al., 2006, p. 14). Components deal with mental models (e.g., mindsets, abilities) can be addressed within dispositional factors.

Implications

Although the active implementation of the state's remedial plan has been in place since its inception in 2020, there have been overt and covert efforts to dismantle the core purpose of the plan. Some of these efforts are observable through current political parties and potentially racial struggles. Party breakdowns were derived from various sources (e.g., Gallup, Ballotpedia, NC Department of Public Instruction) and provided in Figure 31.

Figure 31

2016–2023 Political Affiliations of NC Supreme Court, Legislature, and Superintendent Office



Note. Data of American politics between 2016 and 2023, from North Carolina Elections, by Ballotpedia, 2022 (https://ballotpedia.org/North_Carolina)

For example, Manning, a Republican judge who led *Leandro* decision efforts, supported education transformation efforts, albeit his views on what that transformation looks like was controversial (Nordstrom, 2020). Based on Crystal's school leadership interview responses, Manning's prioritization of school closure threatened schools predominantly attended by students of color, which begs the question of what factors led for such conditions to exist in schools. Judge Manning was given authority to require change from schools (at the time this impacted only the lowest 5% of LP high schools) and to visit and threaten them into transformation; DPI implemented turnaround efforts to support these efforts. Alternatively, Democratic Judge Lee's attempt to continue efforts to eliminate opportunity gaps were stalled by Republican lawmakers, and funding stalled despite the presence of a fiscal surplus. Eventually, Lee was replaced, the *Leandro* plan budget was readjusted to less than 50% of its original amount, and by 2023, a new Republican-led Supreme Court (5–2 party-line decision) halted even the readjusted funding transfer, limiting implementation efforts. SBE goals at the time of Manning did not include the current Goal I to eliminate opportunity gaps. Furthermore, prior to the strategic plan changes in 2019, SBE goals did not highlight racial equity, and instead stated (Montanari & Vecchione, 2016):

- Every student in the NC Public School System graduates from high school prepared for- work, further education and citizenship,
- Every student has a personalized education,
- Every student, every day has excellent educators,
- Every school district has up-to-date financial, business, and technology systems to serve its students, parents and educators, and
- Every student is healthy, safe, and responsible.

Mutually inclusive to potential party-alignment, is an increased willingness to support critical school improvement efforts. This willingness is juxtaposed by an increased fiscal frugality directed at the education system in deference to the business industry.

Atkinson and Leandro

June Atkinson served as the NC State Superintendent of Public Instruction from 2005 to 2017. Her tenure intersected with significant developments related to the *Leandro v. State* (1997, 2004) case. Atkinson's term saw continuous efforts by the NC DPI to align with the constitutional mandate established by the *Leandro* case, ensuring every student in the state has access to a sound basic education. For much of Atkinson's tenure, Judge Manning was the presiding judge overseeing the state's compliance with the *Leandro* decision. His regular reviews and orders during this period held the state accountable, with Atkinson and her department frequently working to address his order, findings, and recommendations (Fitzsimon, 2006). Under Atkinson's leadership, there was consistent advocacy for increased education funding, especially aimed at helping underserved and underfunded districts. The *Leandro* mandate often provided the legal and moral framework for these funding requests.

The Great Recession (2007–2009) posed significant budgetary constraints for the state (Fitzsimon, 2006; Oaks et al., 2019). Atkinson had to navigate the delicate balance of managing reduced education funding and striving to meet the mandates of the *Leandro* decision. DPI initiatives and personnel roles were modified or suffered in consequence. Atkinson introduced and promoted various programs and initiatives, such as the expansion of digital learning and a focus on professional development for teachers. Many of these efforts aimed to raise the quality of education across districts, aligning with the spirit of the *Leandro* mandate to provide equal educational opportunities.

Johnson and Leandro

During Mark Johnson's tenure as the NC State Superintendent of Public Instruction from 2017 to 2021, the *Leandro* case was still under active oversight by the NC courts. Judge Lee took over the oversight from Judge Manning. One of the most significant developments during Johnson's tenure was the commissioning of an independent report by WestEd, a research agency. This report was meant to offer recommendations on how NC could meet its constitutional obligations under the *Leandro* decision. Released in 2019, the WestEd report provided a roadmap for significant investments in the state's public education system.

Johnson acknowledged the findings of the WestEd report and also emphasized the importance of increasing funding and ensuring these funds are used effectively and efficiently. Following the WestEd report (Oaks et al., 2019), Judge Lee ordered the state to work on a comprehensive plan to address the *Leandro* mandates. While Johnson was State Superintendent, there was increased focus on devising this plan and finding ways to ensure every student in NC receives a sound basic education. Johnson's time as State Superintendent coincided with a renewed focus on the *Leandro* case and its implications for NC's education system.

Catherine Truitt and Leandro

Even as Catherine Truitt began her term as the NC State Superintendent in 2021, the *Leandro* case was still under active oversight by NC courts with Judge Lee overseeing the case. After a change in party control, Judge Lee was removed and *Leandro* stalled. Truitt began her tenure by commissioning an Office of Equity under Dr. Edmonds and an Office of Learning Recovery. Dr. Edmonds's departure from DPI in April 2022 marked the end of the Office of Equity and of the office that oversaw equity-driven implementation efforts of *Leandro* (Childress, 2022).

Truitt's term began in the aftermath of the COVID-19 global pandemic, which disrupted traditional education across the state. Addressing learning loss, ensuring the safety of students and staff, and navigating the ongoing challenges of the pandemic were intertwined with the state's obligations under the *Leandro* case. Though the WestEd report, which was commissioned to provide recommendations on how NC could fulfill its constitutional obligations under the *Leandro* decision, influenced the priorities and actions of Truitt's (a) administration, (b) budgetary struggles, (c) routine organizational restructuring by her administration, (d) political priorities, and (e) decisions by the state legislature significantly have impacted implementation of the comprehensive remedial plan.

Current Status of Leandro

The NC School Boards Association (2023) shared Judge James Ammons ordered the state to allocate an additional $677 million to fulfill the educational spending obligations of *Leandro* (Staff, 2023). This figure aligned with the calculations made by Governor Roy Cooper's state budget office in December 2022. Ammons rejected revisions proposed by state legislative leaders, which would have reduced this spending to about $376 million. The order followed a directive from the NC Supreme Court in November 2022, asking Ammons to assess the impact of 2022 state budget changes on previous *Leandro* rulings.

Ammons's ruling, which was in line with earlier calculations by the NC Justice Department, declined to reduce the *Leandro* spending by over $48.4 million as suggested by legislative leaders. The judge also ignored lawmakers' request to address the issue of potentially double-funding programs under the *Leandro* plan. The NC Supreme Court, now with a 5–2 Republican majority, had the authority to decide whether a trial judge can order funds to be

moved without legislative approval. As of April 2023, the NC Supreme Court had yet to schedule a hearing to address the remaining concerns in the case.

In October 2023, Walkenhorst (2023) wrote the legitimacy and jurisdiction of the court to enforce funding the remedial comprehensive plan has been questioned, especially by Associate Justice Phil Berger Jr., who argued not all students and educators in NC had the chance to provide input on the plan. In contrast, Associate Justice Anita Earls, in her dissent, maintained the NC Supreme Court had already dismissed the argument the trial court lacked jurisdiction in this matter. At the time of this dissertation, court dates for the new hearings have not yet been set.

Summary

Political influence in NC has stemmed from the legislative office and the SBE. The legislative office makes the rules and laws, and the SBE identifies policy and uses feedback from DPI departments and schools. The DPI implements policy and, in some cases, is able to make policy recommendations. Though NC believes in local control, the state controls the narrative when initiatives are approved by the SBE. All state level support is linked to statute suggesting if not statutes, then policy guidance for the implementation of TL across local boards and local education agencies may influence systemic factors identified in this study. At the time of this study, the SBE and DPI were collaborating to provide approved districts and schools with leadership development support. Policy adopting critical transformative frameworks in combination with a focus on racial equity, and offering proper funding, educational supports, and capacity for effective implementation can better address stubborn inequities and improve educational access across the state.

Recommendations for Practice

I recommend educational practitioners and policymakers take deliberate steps to cultivate and reinforce TL dispositions across school systems in NC. To facilitate this, there is an imperative to embed the principles of critical race theory, social justice, and advocacy within leadership development programs, ensuring alignment with the transformative tenets established by Shields (2011). Furthermore, it is crucial the DPI collaboratively advance policies that incorporate a critical transformative framework, emphasizing racial equity and providing the necessary funding and resources for effective implementation.

To sustain and amplify the impact of these efforts, the SBE and DPI should offer leadership development support to districts and schools. This support must be informed by both statute and policy guidance to address the systemic factors that contribute to educational inequities, as highlighted by Oakes et al. (2006). Action planning should involve not only a top-down approach but also engage local boards and education agencies in tailoring the implementation of TL principles to their unique contexts. By doing so, they can better navigate the complexities of political influence and local control dynamics historically shaping educational initiatives in the state.

It is essential to foster leadership dispositions challenging existing inequities and promote systemic transformation to achieve more equitable education in NC and to address the state's comprehensive remedial plan prompted by *Leandro*. This requires an integration of TL dispositions into practice, underpinned by robust policy support and a commitment to continuous development at both the individual and institutional levels.

Recommendations for Future Research

It is my recommendation that the next step for research includes an initial testing and retesting of the survey with a group of experts to better ensure survey questions align with TL. A new survey push-out and analysis could support clearer identification of TL characteristics in the field and across the state and could address the subscale not meeting reliability measures. A future survey may also incorporate more questions around leadership and influence to further understand why White school leaders have less perceived influence and how leaders of color in a racialized context would respond. Future research analysis can also explore whether influence in this context, is acting like a proxy for something else (i.e., power).

There are multiple directions in which this research can be narrowed or redirected. For example, future research can open the survey to varying groups to gauge different levels of leadership at the school, district, or state levels or of school stakeholders. For example, this could include interviews with local board members and community members with advocacy power to shed a more holistic insight into the dispositions of governmental decision-makers as compared to community advocates and activists supporting education progress in the state. These interviews may include members or leaders of nonprofit organizations like United Way or local universities. Also, case studies of the largest five public school districts in NC where student, teacher, and leadership dispositions are compared, may shed further light into the internal struggle to change education. There are multiple directions and perspectives that can be explored. However, outside of interviews, the document analysis truly provided a more accurate look into movements at all levels of the state without requiring the level of district by district and person by person approval to survey or interview.

Conclusions

The educational milieu in NC is at a crossroads. Although willingness, aspects of democratic schooling, and aspects of addressing inequitable distributions of power are present among NC leaders, other aspects of critical change receptivity composed of a willingness for change, attitudes that facilitate change, and capacity for change are not so readily available. Systemic challenges, deeply rooted in racial biases and entrenched power dynamics, stand as formidable barriers. Without guidance and strategic pathways that can help develop certain enduring skills and dispositions within educational leaders, change in NC education remains in development with some pockets of transformation. The future of education in NC is dependent on bridging the gap between leadership's intended stance on equitable change and practice. For NC, this begins with a deepening commitment to developing new knowledge frameworks, and to the redistribution of power (Shields, 2010, 2011, 2018, 2020).

REFERENCES

Adam, T. (2020). Open educational practices of MOOC designers: Embodiment and epistemic location. *Distance Education, 41*(2), 171–185. https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2020.1757405

Adams, M. G. (2017). Fostering success: Stories from four recent college graduates. *Negro Educational Review, 68*(1–4), 109–130. https://www.proquest.com/openview/baebe557ac0934d454bd227c1374265a/1

Ahmad, A. (2004). Imperialism of our time. *Socialist Register, 40*, 43–62. https://socialistregister.com/index.php/srv/article/view/5810

Alshmemri, M., Shahwan-Akl, L., & Maude, P. (2017). Herzberg's two-factor theory. *Life Science Journal*, *14*(5), 12–16. https://doi.org/10.7537/marslsj140517.03

Anderson, J. D. (1978). Northern foundations and the shaping of southern black rural education, 1902–1935. *History of Education Quarterly*, *18*(4), 371–396.

Anderson, J. D. (1988/2010). *The education of Blacks in the South, 1860–1935*. Univ of North Carolina Press.

Anderson, N. S., & Kharem, H. (Eds.). (2009). *Education as freedom: African American educational thought and activism*. Lexington Books.

Anyon, J. (1979). Education, social 'structure' and the power of individuals. *Theory & Research in Social Education, 7*(1), 49–59. https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.1979.10506050

Anyon, J. (2005). What "counts" as educational policy? Notes toward a new paradigm. *Harvard Educational Review, 75*(1), 65–88. http://www.jeananyon.org/docs/anyon-2005.pdf

Anyon, J. (2006). What should count as educational research: Notes toward a new paradigm. In G. Ladson-Billings, W. F. Tate, & J. A. Banks (Eds.), *Education research in the public interest: Social justice, action, and policy* (pp. 17–26). Teachers College Press.

Apple, M. W. (1971). The hidden curriculum and the nature of conflict. *Interchange*, *2*(4), 27–40. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02287080

Apple, M. W. (2001). *Cultural politics and education*. Routledge.

Apple, M. W., & King, N. R. (1977). What do schools teach? *Curriculum Inquiry*, *6*(4), 341–358. https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.1977.11075550

Arato, A., & Gebhardt, E. (Eds.). (1985). *The essential Frankfurt school reader*. Continuum.

Arendt, H. (1982). *Lectures on Kant's political philosophy* (R. Beiner, Ed.; pp. 1–174). University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226231785.001.0001

Arneson, R. J. (1990). Against "complex equality". *Public Affairs Quarterly*, *4*(2), 99–110.

North Carolina State Board of Education. (2021). *ARP ESSER NC plan 05-20-21 draft*. https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=10399&AID=268034&MID=9387

Artz, L., & Murphy, B. O. (2000). *Cultural hegemony in the United States*. SAGE Publications.

Au, W. (2014). Seeing students as humans, not products: Why public schools should not be run like private businesses. In P. C. Gorski & K. Zenkov (Eds.), *The big lies of school reform: Finding better solutions for the future of public education* (pp. 143–152). Taylor & Francis. -

Au, W. (2016). Meritocracy 2.0: High-stakes, standardized testing as a racial project of neoliberal multiculturalism. *Educational Policy*, *30*(1), 39–62. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904815614916

Ayers, W., Hunt, J. A., & Quinn, T. (1998). *Teaching for social justice. A democracy and education reader*. New Press.

Ayers, W., Klonsky, M., & Lyon, G. H. (Eds.). (2000). *A simple justice: The challenge of small schools*. Teachers College Press.

Bacher-Hicks, A., Goodman, J., & Mulhern, C. (2020). Inequality in household adaptation to schooling shocks: Covid-induced online learning engagement in real time. *Journal of Public Economics, 193,* Article 104345. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2020.104345

Banks, J. A. (1995). The historical reconstruction of knowledge about race: Implications for transformative teaching. *Educational Researcher, 24*(2), 15–25. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1176421

Banks, J. A. (2004). *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (Vol. 2). C. A. M. Banks (Ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Banks, J. A. (2015). Increasing student academic achievement: Paradigms and explanations. In J. A. Banks (Ed.), *Cultural diversity and education* (pp. 91–117). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315622255

Barrett, M. (2021, July 21). Critical race theory debate comes to Buncombe. *Mountain Xpress*. https://mountainx.com/news/critical-race-theory-debate-comes-to-buncombe/

Barton, A. C., & Yang, K. (2000). The culture of power and science education: Learning from Miguel. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, *37*(8), 871–889. https://doi.org/10.1002/1098-2736(200010)37:8<871::AID-TEA7>E3.0.CO;2-9

Bartunek, J. M., Lacey, C. A., & Wood, D. R. (1992). Social cognition in organizational change: An insider-outsider approach. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *28*(2), 204–223. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886392282004

Batchelor, J. E. (2015). *Race and education in North Carolina: From segregation to desegregation*. LSU Press.

Battle, K. P. (1907). *History of the University of North Carolina: From its beginning to the death of President Swain, 1789–1868*. Edwards & Broughton Printing Company.

Beck, U. (1992). *Risk society: Towards a new modernity* (Vol. 17). SAGE Publications.

Beck, U. (2009). Critical theory of world risk society: A cosmopolitan vision. *Constellations*, *16*(1), 3–22. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8675.2009.00534.x

Bedford, M. J., & Shaffer, S. (2023). Examining literature through tenets of critical race theory: A pedagogical approach for the ELA classroom. *Multicultural Perspectives*, *25*(1), 4–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2022.2162523

Bell, D. A. (1980). *Shades of Brown: New perspectives on school desegregation*. Teachers College Press.

Bell, D. A. (1992). *Race, racism and American law* (3rd ed.). Little Brown.

Bell, D. A. (1995). Who's afraid of critical race theory. *University of Illinois Law Review*, *1995*(4), 893–910.

Bell, D. A. (2018). *Faces at the bottom of the well: The permanence of racism*. Hachette UK. (Original work published 1992).

Bell, M. P., Berry, D., Leopold, J., & Nkomo, S. (2021). Making Black Lives Matter in academia: A Black feminist call for collective action against anti-blackness in the academy. *Gender, Work & Organization*, *28*, 39–57. https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12555

Benitez, R. M., & Malagon, M. C. (2019). Leading with a social justice lens: Perceptions and experiences of K–12 administrators. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, *18*(3), 422–446. https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/joel/vol5/iss1/2

Benson, T. A., & Fiarman, S. E. (2020). *Unconscious bias in schools: A developmental approach to exploring race and racism*. Harvard Education Press.

Berner, M., Vazquez, A., & McDougall, M. (2016). *Documenting poverty in North Carolina* (pp. 1–20). The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. https://www.sog.unc.edu/sites/default/files/reports/2016-03-31%2020151227%20Documenting%20Poverty%202016-final.pdf

Bernerth, J. (2004). Expanding our understanding of the change message. *Human Resource Development Review*, *3*(1), 36–52. https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484303261230

Bertocchi, G. (2015). Slavery, racial inequality, and education. *IZA World of Labor*, Article 122. https://doi.org/10.15185/izawol.122

Bertocchi, G. (2016). The legacies of slavery in and out of Africa. *IZA Journal of Migration*, *5*, Article 24. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40176-016-0072-0

Bhabha, H. K. (1983). The other question . . . . *Screen*, *24*(6), 18–36. https://doi.org/10.1093/screen/24.6.18

Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The location of culture*. Routledge.

Bhattacharya, K. (2017). *Fundamentals of qualitative research: A practical guide*. Routledge.

Blood, N., & Heavyhead, R. (2007). *Blackfoot influence on Abraham Maslow* [Lecture]. Blackfoot Digital Library

Blustein, D. (2006). *The psychology of working: A new perspective for career development, counseling, and public policy*. Routledge.

Bockstette, V., Chanda, A., & Putterman, L. (2002). States and markets: The advantage of an early start. *Journal of Economic Growth*, *7*(4), 347–369. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40216071

Bonilla-Silva, E. (1997). Rethinking racism: Toward a structural interpretation. *American Sociological Review*, *62*(3), 465–480. https://doi.org/10.2307/2657316

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2001). *White supremacy and racism in the post-civil rights era*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2003). Racial attitudes or racial ideology? An alternative paradigm for examining actors' racial views. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, *8*(1), 63–82. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569310306082

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2015). The structure of racism in color-blind, "post-racial" America. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *59*(11), 1358–1376. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764215586826

Bonilla-Silva, E., & Ashe, A. (2014). Colorblind racism and popular media. In S. Nilsen (Ed.), *The colorblind screen* (pp. 57–80). New York University Press. https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9781479809769.003.0003

Booher-Jennings, J. (2005). Below the bubble: "Educational triage" and the Texas accountability system. *American Educational Research Journal*, *42*(2), 231–268. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312042002231

Bouckenooghe, D. (2010). Positioning change recipients' attitudes toward change in the organizational change literature. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, *46*(4), 500–531. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886310367944

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood Press.

Boyle, J. (2022, March 2). 1800s forced convict labor left behind a ‘mass grave’ of potentially hundreds in North Carolina. *USA TODAY*. https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2022/03/02/north-carolina-railroad-african-american-convict-laborers-mass-grave/6895431001/?gnt-cfr=1

Brathwaite, J. (2017). Neoliberal education reform and the perpetuation of inequality. *Critical Sociology*, *43*(3), 429–448. https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920516649418

Brockett, R. G. (1997). Humanism as an instructional paradigm. In C. R. Dillis & A. J. Romiszowski (Eds.), *Instructional development paradigms* (pp. 245–256). Educational Technology Publications.

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, 347 U.S. 483 (1954). https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/347/483/

Bruton, A., & Robles-Piña, R. A. (2009). Deficit thinking and Hispanic student achievement: Scientific information resources. *Problems of Education in the 21st Century*, *15*, Article 41. https://www.scientiasocialis.lt/pec/files/pdf/41-48.Bruton_Vol.15.pdf

Bryant, J. (2008). State secret: North Carolina and the Cherokee Trail of Tears. *Journal of American Indian Education*, *47*(2), 3–21. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24398556

Burnett-Bowie, S. M., Zeidman, J. A., Soltoff, A. E., Carden, K. T., James, A. K., & Armstrong, K. A. (2022). Attitudes and actions related to racism: The Anti-RaCism (ARC) Survey study. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, *37*(10), 2337–2344. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11606-021-07385-1

Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. Harper & Row.

Burt, R. S. (1997). The contingent value of social capital. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *42*(2), 339–365. https://doi.org/10.2307/2393923

Butterfield, L. H. (Ed.). (1951). The greatest battle: Rush and the yellow fever 1793-1800. In *Letters of Benjamin Rush: Volume II: 1793-1813* (Vol. 5596, pp. 623–828). Princeton University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvh9w0fv.3

Caliendo, S. M. (2014). *Inequality in America: Race, poverty, and fulfilling democracy's promise*. Avalon Publishing.

Çalışkan, Ö., & Gökalp, G. (2020). A micro-level perspective in organizational change: Cognitive dissonance, sense-making and attitude change. *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, *26*(4), 719–742. https://open.metu.edu.tr/handle/11511/93375

Cameron, K. S., Dutton, J. E., & Quinn, R. E. (2003). An introduction to positive organizational scholarship. *Positive organizational scholarship*, *3*(13), 2–21. https://webuser.bus.umich.edu/cameronk/PDFs/POS/POS%20-%20CHAPTER%201-FINAL.pdf

Cameron, K., & Dutton, J. (Eds.). (2003). *Positive organizational scholarship: Foundations of a new discipline*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Carbajal, M. (2009). *Foucault in the school setting.* https://www.academia.edu/4313458/Foucault_in_the_School_Setting

Caron, P. (2009). Designing a professional development school program for non-traditional students. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, *5*, 1–13. https://www.aabri.com/manuscripts/09269.pdf

Carruthers, C. (2018). *Unapologetic: A Black, queer, and feminist mandate for radical movements*. Beacon Press.

Carter, P. L., & Welner, K. G. (Eds.). (2013). *Closing the opportunity gap: What America must do to give every child an even chance*. Oxford University Press.

Cash, P. S. (2014). *The deliberate speed of the tar heel state: North Carolina's efforts to resist school desegregation, 1954–1966* [Doctoral dissertation, East Tennessee State University]. Digital Commons @ East Tennessee State University. https://dc.etsu.edu/etd/2409

Cecelski, D. S. (2012). *The fire of freedom: Abraham Galloway and the slaves' Civil War*. UNC Press Books.

Chafe, W. H. (1981). *Civilities and civil rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and Black struggle for freedom*. Oxford University Press.

Chao, M. M., Okazaki, S., & Hong, Y. Y. (2011). The quest for multicultural competence: Challenges and lessons learned from clinical and organizational research. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *5*(5), 263–274. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2011.00350.x

Chapman, C., & Muijs, D. (2013). Collaborative school turnaround: A study of the impact of school federations on student outcomes. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, *12*(3), 200–226. https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2013.831456

Cheah, P. (1996). Mattering. *Diacritics*, *26*(1), 108–139. https://www.jstor.org/stable/1566255

Childress, G. (2022, April 18). *NC Department of public instruction to lose Leandro strategist to verdant greens of N.C. central university*. NC Newsline. https://ncnewsline.com/briefs/n-c-department-of-public-instruction-to-lose-leandro-strategist-to-verdant-greens-of-n-c-central-university/

Christ, T. W., & Makarani, S. A. (2009). Teachers' attitudes about teaching English in India: An embedded mixed methods study. *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches*, *3*(1), 73–87. https://doi.org/10.5172/mra.455.3.1.73

Clark, J., Ellett, C., Bateman, J., & Rugutt, J. (1996, November). *Faculty receptivity/resistance to change, personal and organizational efficacy, decision deprivation and effectiveness in research 1 universities* [Paper presentation]. Twenty-First Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Memphis, TN, United States. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED402846.pdf

Clegg, C., & Walsh, S. (2004). Change management: Time for a change! *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *13*(2), 217–239. https://doi.org/10.1080/13594320444000074

Cohen, E., & Goode, T. D. (1999). *Policy Brief 1: Rationale for cultural competence in primary health care*. National Center for Cultural Competence.

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology*, *94*, S95–S120. https://doi.org/10.1086/228943

The Common school: 1770- 1890. (2005). [Video]. Infobase. https://www.films.com/id/1539

Connelly, F. M., & Clandinin, D. J. (2006). Narrative inquiry. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli, & P. B. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 477–487). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Coon, C. L. (1908). *Public education in North Carolina* (Vol. II). Edwards & Broughton Printing Company.

Corradetti, C. (2017). Frankfurt school and critical theory. *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, *2012*. https://ssrn.com/abstract=2211197

Crenshaw, K. W. (1988). Toward a race-conscious pedagogy in legal education. *National Black Law Journal*, *11*, 1. https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/natblj11&div=12&id=&page=

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Maietta, R. C. (2002). Qualitative research. In D. C. Miller & N. J. Salkind (Eds.), *Handbook of social research* (pp. 143–184). SAGE Publications. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412984386

Crow, J. J., Escott, P. D., & Hatley, F. J. (2002/2011). *A history of African Americans in North Carolina*. N.C. Department of Cultural Resources, Office of Archives and History.

Cryer, P., & Elton, L. (1990). Catastrophe theory: A unified model for educational change. *Studies in Higher Education*, *15*(1), 75–86. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079012331377601

Cummings, S., Bridgman, T., & Brown, K. G. (2016). Unfreezing change as three steps: Rethinking Kurt Lewin's legacy for change management. *Human Relations*, *69*(1), 33–60. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726715577707

Cummings, T. G., & Molloy, E. S. (1977). *Improving productivity and the quality of work life*. Praeger.

Currie, J. (2005). Wither deliberate speed: North Carolina and school desegregation. *Tar Heel Junior Historian*, *44*(1). https://files.nc.gov/dncr-moh/With%20Deliberate%20Speed.pdf

Dantley, M., & Tillman, L. C. (2006). Social justice leadership as praxis: Developing capacities through preparation programs. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *48*(2), 278–307. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X11427394

Darling-Hammond, L., & Cook-Harvey, C. M. (2018, September). *Educating the whole child: Improving school climate to support student success*. Learning Policy Institute. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED606462.pdf

Darling-Hammond, L., Adamson, F., & Abedi, J. (2010). *Beyond basic skills: The role of performance assessment in achieving 21st century standards of learning*. Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.

Davis, L. P., & Museus, S. D. (2019). What is deficit thinking? An analysis of conceptualizations of deficit thinking and implications for scholarly research. *NCID Currents, 1*(1). https://doi.org/10.3998/currents.17387731.0001.110

Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Assessing intercultural competence in study abroad students. In M. Byram & A. Feng (Eds.), *Languages for intercultural communication and education* (pp. 232–276). Multilingual Matters.

DeCuir, J. T., & Dixson, A. D. (2004). "So, when it comes out, they aren't that surprised that it is there": Using critical race theory as a tool of analysis of race and racism in education. *Educational Researcher, 33*(5), 26–31. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X033005026

Delgado R., & Stefancic, J. (2001). *Critical race theory: An introduction*. New York University Press.

Delgado, R. (1991). Norms and normal science: Toward a critique of normativity in legal thought. *University of Pennsylvania Law Review, 139*(4), 933–962. https://doi.org/10.2307/3312376

Delgado, R. (1995). *The Rodrigo chronicles: Conversations about America and race*. New York University Press.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (1994). The social construction of Brown v. Board of Education: Law reform and the reconstructive paradox. *William and Mary Law Review, 36*, 547. https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/wmlr36&div=19&id=&page=

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (2021). Discerning critical moments. In M. Lynn & A. D. Dixson (Eds.), *Handbook of critical race theory in education* (pp. 22–31). Routledge.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (Eds.). (2017). Introduction. In *Critical race theory: The cutting edge* (3rd ed., pp. 1–18). Temple University Press.

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (Eds.). 2020. *Critical race theory: The cutting edge*. Temple University Press.

Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. W. W. Norton & Company. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED387274.pdf

Department of Public Instruction, N. C. (2016). *NCStar wiseways*. Ncstar.weebly.com. https://ncstar.weebly.com/wiseways.html

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. Macmillan.

Di Fabio, A., & Gori, A. (2016). Developing a new instrument for assessing acceptance of change. *Frontiers in Psychology, 7*, 802. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00802

Diamond, J. B., & Gomez, L. M. (2023). Disrupting White supremacy and anti-Black racism in educational organizations. *Educational Researcher*. Advance Online Publication. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X231161054

Diener, E., Lucas, R. E., & Oishi, S. (2009). Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and life satisfaction. In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 187–194). Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195187243.013.0017

Dion, M. J. (2006). *The impact of workplace incivility and occupational stress on the job satisfaction and turnover intention of acute care nurses*. University of Connecticut.

Dreeben, R. (1968). *On what is learned in school*. Addison-Wesley Publishing. https://archive.org/details/DreebenOnWhatIsLearnedInSchool

Drever, E. (1995). *Using semi-structured interviews in small-scale research. A teacher's guide*. Scottish Council for Research in Education.

Du Bois, W. E. B. (2002). *The upbuilding of black Durham: The success of the negroes and their value to a tolerant and helpful southern city*. Academic Affairs Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. (Original work published 1912).

Dubin, E., & Prins, E. (2011). Blueprinting a Freirean pedagogy of imagination: Hope, untested feasibility, and the dialogic person. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, *17*(1), 23–39. https://doi.org/10.7227/JACE.17.1.4

Dubin, E., & Prins, E. (2011). Blueprinting a Freirean pedagogy of imagination: Hope, untested feasibility, and the dialogic person. *Journal of Adult and Continuing Education*, *17*(1), 23–39.

DuBois, W. E. B. (2021). Chapter 2: Of the dawn of freedom. In *The souls of black folk*. The Project Gutenberg. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/408/408-h/408-h.htm#chap02

Dutton, V. F. (1976). Humanizing education: A simple definition. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, *12*(3), 79. https://doi.org/10.1080/00228958.1976.10516924

Dworkin, R. (2000). *Sovereign virtue: The theory and practice of equality*. Harvard University Press.

Eccles, J. S., Barber, B. L., Stone, M., & Hunt, J. (2003). Extracurricular activities and adolescent development. *Journal of Social Issues, 59*(4), 865–889. https://doi.org/10.1046/j.0022-4537.2003.00095.x

Echeita, G. (2019). Waiting for a fruitful crossroads between those who today circulate in parallel on the educational paths of equity. *Social Justice, Inclusion, Coexistence, Culture of Peace or Global Citizenship. International Journal of Education for Social Justice, 8*(2). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-31709-5_10

Elliott, G., Kao, S., & Grant, A. M. (2004). Mattering: Empirical validation of a social-psychological concept. *Self and Identity, 3*(4), 339–354. https://doi.org/10.1080/13576500444000119

Entwistle, H. (2009). *Antonio Gramsci (Routledge revivals): Conservative schooling for radical politics*. Routledge.

Esquierdo-Leal, J. L., & Houmanfar, R. A. (2021). Creating inclusive and equitable cultural practices by linking leadership to systemic change. *Behavior Analysis in Practice, 14,* 499–512. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40617-020-00519-7

Fajardo Mora, N. R. (2014). Ideologies revealed during the construction of meaning in an EFL class. *Profile Issues in Teachers Professional Development, 16*(2), 21–36. https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/1692/169232511003.pdf

Feagin, J. (2013). *Systemic racism: A theory of oppression*. Routledge.

Feigenbaum, K. D., & Smith, R. A. (2020). Historical narratives: Abraham Maslow and Blackfoot interpretations. *The Humanistic Psychologist, 48*(3), 232–243. https://doi.org/10.1037/hum0000145

Feldhoff, T., Radisch, F., & Bischof, L. M. (2016). Designs and methods in school improvement research: A systematic review. *Journal of Educational Administration, 54*(2), 209–240. https://doi.org/10.1108/jea-07-2014-0083

Ferguson, T. J., Eyre, H. L., & Ashbaker, M. (2000). Unwanted identities: A key variable in shame–anger links and gender differences in shame. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, 42*, 133–157. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1023/A:1007061505251

Flinders, D. J., & Thornton, S. J. (Eds.). (2021). *The curriculum studies reader*. Routledge.

Flores, O. J. (2018). (Re) constructing the language of the achievement gap to an opportunity gap: The counternarratives of three African American women school leaders. *Journal of School Leadership, 28*(3), 344–373. https://doi.org/10.1177/105268461802800304

Ford, J. D., & Ford, L. W. (1995). The role of conversations in producing intentional change in organizations. *Academy of Management Review, 20*(3), 541–570. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1995.9508080330

Fortner, K. M., Lalas, J., & Strikwerda, H. (2021). Embracing asset-based school leadership dispositions in advancing true equity and academic achievement for students living in poverty. *Journal of Leadership, Equity, and Research*, *7*(1), 1–19. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1288402.pdf

Foucault, M. (1972/1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972–1977*. Vintage.

Fountain, B. E., Jr., & Latta, E. M. (1990). *The community college system in North Carolina: A brief history*. The North Carolina State Advisory Council on Vocational Education. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED329304

Frahm, J., & Brown, K. (2007). First steps: Linking change communication to change receptivity. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *20*(3), 370–387. https://doi.org/10.1108/09534810710740191

Franklin, V. P. (2002). Introduction: Cultural capital and African American education. *The Journal of African American History, 87*(2), 175–181. https://doi.org/10.1086/JAAHv87n2p175

Freire, P. (1970/2005). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (30th anniv). Continuum.

Freire, P. (1974/2005). *Freire: Education for critical consciousness*. Continuum.

Freire, P. (2015). *Pedagogy of commitment*. Routledge.

Freire, P. (2021). *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Friend, J., & Caruthers, L. (2012). Reconstructing the cultural context of urban schools: Listening to the voices of high school students. *Educational Studies, 48*(4), 366–388. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2011.647152

Friend, J., & Caruthers, L. (2015). Transforming the school reform agenda: A framework for including student voice in urban school renewal. *Journal of Urban Learning, Teaching, and Research, 11*, 14–25. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1071419.pdf

Gagnon, D. J., & Mattingly, M. J. (2012). *Beginning teachers are more common in rural, high-poverty, and racially diverse schools*. University of New Hampshire Scholars Repository. https://scholars.unh.edu/carsey/173

Gamoran, A., & An, B. P. (2016). Effects of school segregation and school resources in a changing policy context. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 38*(1), 43–64. https://doi.org/10.3102/0162373715585604

Gandhi, M. H., & Mukherji, P. (2022). *Learning theories*. StatPearls Publishing.

Garrett, J. L. (2008). Is your school accessible and inviting? *Kappa Delta Pi Record, 44*(3), 106–107. https://doi.org/10.1080/00228958.2008.10516505

Gay, G. (2004). The importance of multicultural education. In D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thornton (Eds.), *The curriculum studies reader* (2nd ed., pp. 315–322). Routledge.

Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.

Gay, L. R., Mills, G. E., & Airasian, P. W. (2009). *Educational research competencies for analysis and applications*. Merrill/Pearson.

Gennaioli, N., & Rainer, I. (2007). The modern impact of precolonial centralization in Africa. *Journal of Economic Growth*, *12*(3), 185–234. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40216120

Giroux, H. A. (2013). The disimagination machine and the pathologies of power. *Symploke*, *21*(1), 257–269. https://doi.org/10.5250/symploke.21.1-2.0257

Giroux, H. A., & McLaren, P. (1997). Paulo Freire, postmodernism and the utopian imagination: A Blochian reading. In J. O. Daniel & T. Moylan (Eds.), *Not yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch* (pp. 138–162). Verso Press.

Giroux, H. A., & Penna, A. N. (1979). Social education in the classroom: The dynamics of the hidden curriculum. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, *7*(1), 21–42. https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.1979.10506048

Givens, J. R. (2021). *Fugitive pedagogy: Carter G. Woodson and the art of Black teaching*. Harvard University Press.

Glaude, E. S., Jr. (2020). *Begin again: James Baldwin's America and its urgent lessons for our own*. Crown.

Glew, D. J., O'Leary-Kelly, A. M., Griffin, R. W., & Van Fleet, D. D. (1995). Participation in organizations: A preview of the issues and proposed framework for future analysis. *Journal of Management*, *21*(3), 395–421. https://doi.org/10.1016/0149-2063(95)90014-4

González, N., Moll, L., & Amanti, C. (2007). Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms. *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*, *10*(4), 1–3. http://tesl-ej.org/pdf/ej40/r9.pdf

Goode, T. D. (2010). *A guide for using the cultural and linguistic competence family organizational assessment instrument*. National Center for Cultural Competence.

Goode, T. D., Jones, W., Jackson, V., Bronheim, S., Dunne, C., & Lorenzo Hubert, I. (2010). *Cultural and linguistic competence family organization assessment instrument*. National Center for Cultural Competence.

Goodlad, J. I. (1979). *What schools are for*. Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.

Goodlad, J. I. (1984). *A place called school. Prospects for the future*. McGraw-Hill.

Goodley, D. (Ed.). (2020). Who's allowed to be human? In D. Goodley, *Disability and other human questions* (pp. 21–39). Emerald Publishing.

Gorski, P. (2008). The myth of the "culture of poverty". *Educational Leadership*, *65*(7), 32. https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/the-myth-of-the-culture-of-poverty

Gorski, P. C. (2012). Perceiving the problem of poverty and schooling: Deconstructing the class stereotypes that mis-shape education practice and policy. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *45*(2), 302–319. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2012.666934

Gramsci, A. (1971/2020). Selections from the prison notebooks. In T. Prentki & N. Abraham (Eds.), *The applied theatre reader* (pp. 141–142). Routledge.

Granados, A. (2019, December 10). Leandro report released: What it will take for NC children to receive sound, basic education. *EducationNC*. https://www.ednc.org/leandro-report-released-what-it-will-take-for-nc-children-to-receive-sound-basic-education/

Granados, A. (2021, June 9). Judge signs order to implement comprehensive Leandro plan; Democratic lawmakers discuss taking action. *EducationNC*. https://www.ednc.org/2021-06-09-judge-signs-order-implement-comprehensive-leandro-plan/

Green, E. (2019, August 13). *Equity and excellence: Carver high school summer institute* [Conference session]. 2019 Institute for Student Achievement, Winston-Salem, NC, United States.

Green, T. L. (2015). Leading for urban school reform and community development. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *51*(5), 679–711. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X15577694

Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts and social change*. Jossey-Bass.

Grogan, M., & Andrews, R. (2002). Defining preparation and professional development for the future. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *38*(2), 233–256. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X02382007

Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1980). *Work redesign*. Addison-Wesley.

Haggis, T. (2006). Pedagogies for diversity: Retaining critical challenge amidst fears of 'dumbing down.' *Studies in Higher Education*, *31*(5), 521–535. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070600922709

Hall, S. (1986). The problem of ideology-Marxism without guarantees. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, *10*(2), 28–44. https://doi.org/10.1177/019685998601000203

Hall, S. (1996). Chapter 1: The problem of ideology: Marxism without guarantees. In K. H. Chen & D. Morley (Eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies* (pp. 24–45). Routledge.

Hall, S., & Gieben, B. (1992). The West and the rest: Discourse and power. In T. D. Gupta, C. E. James, C. Andersen, G.-E. Galabuzi, & R. C. A. Maaka (Eds.), *Race and racialization: Essential readings* (2nd ed., pp. 85–95). Canadian Scholars.

Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (1996). Reassessing the principal's role in school effectiveness: A review of empirical research, 1980–1995. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *32*(1), 5–44. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X96032001002

Hamilton, C. M., Strader, L. C., Pratt, J. G., Maiese, D., Hendershot, T., Kwok, R. K., Hammond, J. A., Huggins, W., Jackman, D., Pan, H., Nettles, D. S., Beaty, T. H., Farrer, L. A., Kraft, P., Marazita, M. L., Ordovas, J. M., Pato, C. N., Spitz, M. R., Wagener, D., & Haines, J. (2011). The PhenX toolkit: Get the most from your measures. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, *174*(3), 253–260. https://doi.org/10.1093/aje/kwr193

Hannah-Jones, N. (2021). *The 1619 Project: A new origin story*. One World.

Hannon, P. A., Helfrich, C. D., Chan, K. G., Allen, C. L., Hammerback, K., Kohn, M. J., Parrish, A. T., Weiner, B. J., & Harris, J. R. (2017). Development and pilot test of the workplace readiness questionnaire, a theory-based instrument to measure small workplaces' readiness to implement wellness programs. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, *31*(1), 67–75. https://doi.org/10.4278/ajhp.141204-quan-604

Hansen, N. D., Pepitone-Arreola-Rockwell, F., & Greene, A. F. (2000). Multicultural competence: Criteria and case examples. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, *31*(6), 652–660. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0735-7028.31.6.652

Harris, L. (2020). *Persistent poverty demands a just recovery for North Carolinians 2020 poverty report*. Budget & Tax Center. https://www.ncjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/POVERTY-report-2020.pdf

Harris, A., Chapman, C., Muijs, D., Russ, J., & Stoll, L. (2013). Improving schools in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas: A review of research evidence. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 24(2), 129-149.

Harvey, D. (2005). *A brief history of neoliberalism*. Oxford University Press.

Hatch, T., Hill, K., & Roegman, R. (2020). Instruction, equity, and social networks in district-wide improvement. *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, *5*(1), 72–91. https://doi.org/10.1108/JPCC-07-2019-0018

Hays, D. G., Chang, C. Y., & Decker, S. L. (2007). Initial development and psychometric data for the privilege and oppression inventory. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*, *40*(2), 66–79.

Healy, T., & Cote, S. (2001). *The well-being of nations: The role of human and social capital. Education and skills*. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Hedge, N., & MacKenzie, A. (2012). Putting Nussbaum's capability approach to work: Re-visiting inclusion. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *42*(3), 327–344. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2012.706252

Held, D., & McGrew, A. (2007). The great globalization debate: An introduction. In D. Held & A. McGrew (Eds.), *Globalization theory: Approaches and controversies* (pp. 1–50). Polity. https://soc303.files.wordpress.com/2011/12/soc303_globalizationdebate.pdf

Held, D., McGrew, A., Goldblatt, D., & Perraton, J. (1999). Global transformations: Politics, economics and culture. In C. Pierson & S. Tormey (Eds.), *Politics at the edge: The PSA Yearbook 1999* (pp. 14–28). Palgrave Macmillan.

Helfrich, C. D., Li, Y.-F., Sharp, N. D., & Sales, A. E. (2009). Organizational readiness to change assessment (ORCA): Development of an instrument based on the promoting action on research in health services (PARIHS) framework. *Implementation Science, 4*(1), 38. https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-4-38

Herbst, J. (2000). *States and power in Africa: Comparative lessons in authority and control* (Revised 2nd ed., Vol. 149). Princeton University Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qh05m

Herzberg, F., Mausner, B., & Snyderman, B. (1959). *The motivation to work* (2nd ed.). John Wiley.

Hilliard, K. M. (2014). *Masters, slaves, and exchange: Power's purchase in the old South*. Cambridge University Press.

Hodge, E. M., & Stosich, E. L. (2022). Accountability, alignment, and coherence: How educators made sense of complex policy environments in the common core era. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, *44*(4), 543–566. https://doi.org/10.3102/01623737221079650

Hoke Cnty. Bd. of Educ. v. State, 382 N.C. 386, 879 S.E.2d 193, 2022 NCSC 108 (N.C. 2022)

Hoke County Board of Education v. State, 883 S.E.2d 480 (2023). https://casetext.com/case/hoke-cnty-bd-of-educ-v-state-35

Holloway, I., & Wheeler, S. (2002). The nature of qualitative research: Development and perspectives. *Qualitative Research in Nursing*, 3–25. https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1130000797805317120

hooks, b. (2014). *Teaching to transgress*. Routledge.

Horkheimer, M. (1982). Traditional and critical theory. In *Critical theory: Selected Essays* (pp. 185–243). Continuum Publications. https://criticaltheoryworkshop.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/horkheimer_traditional-and-critical-theory.pdf (Original work published 1975)

Hughey, M. W., Embrick, D. G., & Doane, A. W. (2015). Paving the way for future race research: Exploring the racial mechanisms within a color-blind, racialized social system. *American Behavioral Scientist*, *59*(11), 1347–1357. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764215591033

Hui, T. K. (2021, November 10). *A closer look at judge's ruling to fund North Carolina schools.* News Observer. https://www.newsobserver.com/news/local/education/article255713636.html

Hursh, D. (2007). Assessing No Child Left Behind and the rise of neoliberal education policies. *American Educational Research Journal*, *44*(3), 493–518. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831207306764

Hussain, S. T., Lei, S., Akram, T., Haider, M. J., Hussain, S. H., & Ali, M. (2018). Kurt Lewin's change model: A critical review of the role of leadership and employee involvement in organizational change. *Journal of Innovation & Knowledge*, *3*(3), 123–127. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jik.2016.07.002

Hytten, K., & Stemhagen, K. (2023). Abolishing, renarrativizing, and revaluing: Dismantling antiblack racism in education. *Educational Researcher*. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X221143092

Irvine, J. J. (2010). Foreword. In H. R. Milner (Ed.), *Culture, curriculum, and identity in education* (pp. xi). Palgrave Macmillan.

Jackson, P. W. (1968). *Life in classrooms*. Teachers College Press.

Jefferson, T. (1820). "Thomas Jefferson to William Charles Jarvis, 28 September 1820," *Founders Online,* National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-16-02-0234. [Original source: *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Retirement Series, vol. 16, *1 June 1820 to 28 February 1821*, ed. J. Jefferson Looney et al. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019, pp. 287–289.]

Johnson, C. W. (Ed.). (2018). *Collective memory work: A methodology for learning with and from lived experience*. Routledge.

Jones, S. R., & Stewart, D.-L. (2016). Evolution of student development theory. *New Directions for Student Services*, *2016*(154), 17–28. https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20172

Jurado de Los Santos, P., Moreno-Guerrero, A. J., Marín-Marín, J. A., & Soler Costa, R. (2020). The term equity in education: A literature review with scientific mapping in web of science. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *17*(10), 3526. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17103526

Kelley, E. C. (1969). *Humanizing the education of children: A philosophical statement*. A Study/Action Publication. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED035072.pdf

Kellner, D. (1997). Ernst Bloch, utopia and ideology critique. In J. O. Daniel & T. Moylan (Eds.), *Not yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch* (pp. 80–95). Verso Books.

Kellner, D., & O'Hara, H. (1976). Utopia and Marxism in Ernst Bloch. *New German Critique*, (9), 11–34. https://doi.org/10.2307/487686

Kennedy, B., & Dreir, A. (2017). *How North Carolina should be taking advantage of the recovery* [Report]. North Carolina Justice Center. https://www.ncjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/BTC-POVERTY-REPORT-2017.pdf

Khasnabish, D. A., & Haiven, M. (2014). *The radical imagination: Social movement research in the age of austerity*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Khilji, S. E. (2021). Lived experiences of inequalities in the USA: A sense-making perspective. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal*, *40*(8), 986–1012. https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-12-2020-0373

Kirp, D. L. (1982). Power and society. *Public Administration Review*, *42*(3). https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/pbcamnstn42&div=4&id=&page=

Kitson, A. L., Harvey, G., & McCormack, B. (1998). Enabling the implementation of evidence based practice: A conceptual framework. *BMJ Quality & Safety*, *7*(3), 149–158. https://qualitysafety.bmj.com/content/7/3/149.short

Kitson, A. L., Rycroft-Malone, J., Harvey, G., McCormack, B., Seers, K., & Titchen, A. (2008). Evaluating the successful implementation of evidence into practice using the PARiHS framework: Theoretical and practical challenges. *Implementation Science*, *3*, Article 1. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/1748-5908-3-1

Knight, E. W. (1916). *Public school education in North Carolina*. Houghton Mifflin.

Kumashiro, K. K. (2000). Toward a theory of anti-oppressive education. *Review of Educational Research*, *70*(1), 25–53. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543070001025

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children*. Jossey-Bass.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, *32*(3), 465–491. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312032003465

Ladson-Billings, G. (1998). Just what is critical race theory and what's it doing in a nice field like education? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *11*(1), 7–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/095183998236863

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the achievement gap to the education debt: Understanding achievement in US schools. *Educational Researcher*, *35*(7), 3–12. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X035007003

Ladson-Billings, G. (2017). "Makes me wanna holler": Refuting the "culture of poverty" discourse in urban schooling. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *673*(1), 80–90. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716217718793

Ladson-Billings, G. (2021). I'm here for the hard re-set: Post pandemic pedagogy to preserve our culture. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *54*(1), 68–78. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2020.1863883

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, *97*(1), 47–68.

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F. (2016). Toward a critical race theory of education. In *Critical race theory in education* (pp. 10–31). Routledge.

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F., IV. (1995). Toward a critical race theory of education. *Teachers College Record*, *97*(1), 47–68. https://doi.org/10.1177/016146819509700104

Ladson-Billings, G., & Tate, W. F., IV. (Eds.). (2016). Toward a critical race theory of education. In L. Parker & D. Gillborn (Eds.), *Critical race theory in education* (pp. 10–31). Routledge.

Lafer, S. (2014). Democratic design for the humanization of education. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Studies*, *1*(1), 6–12. https://doi.org/10.29333/ejecs/11

Lamb, S., & Araos, A. (1996). Curriculum hierarchy and devalued knowledge: The case of environmental education. *Curriculum and Teaching*, *11*(2), 19–32. https://doi.org/10.7459/ct/11.2.03

Lather, P. (2013). Methodology-21: What do we do in the afterward? *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *26*(6), 634–645. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2013.788753

Lau, C. M., & Woodman, R. W. (1995). Understanding organizational change: A schematic perspective. *Academy of Management Journal*, *38*(2), 537–554. https://doi.org/10.2307/256692

Leandro v. State, 346 N.C. 336, 345 (1997).

Lears, T. J. (1985). The concept of cultural hegemony: Problems and possibilities. *The American Historical Review*, *90*(3), 567–593. https://doi.org/10.2307/1860957

Lee, D. (2020, January 21). *Consent order regarding the need for remedial, systemic actions for the achievement of Leandro compliance*. https://publicschoolsfirstnc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/File-stamped-Order-dated-1-21-2019.pdf

Leeson, O., Bean, K., & Drew, J. (2018). Identifying areas for change: A case study on North Carolina state public school performance. *SMU Data Science Review*, *1*(3), 4.

https://scholar.smu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1030&context=datasciencereview#:~:text=North%20Carolina%20defines%20an%20economically

Lefler, H. T. (1956). *North Carolina history told by contemporaries*. University of North Carolina Press.

Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (1990). Transformational leadership: How principals can help reform school cultures. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 1*(4), 249–280. https://doi.org/10.1080/0924345900010402

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2008). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. *School Leadership & Management, 28*, 27–42. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632430701800060

Levin, J. S. (1998). Making sense of organizational change. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 1998*(102), 43–54. https://doi.org/10.1002/cc.10205

Levinson, B. A. (2011). Introduction. In B. A. Levinson, J. P. K. Gross, C. Hanks, J. Heimer Dadds, K. Kumasi, & J. Link (Eds.), *Beyond critique: Exploring critical social theories and education* (pp. 1–24). Routledge.

Levitas, R. (1990). Educated hope: Ernst Bloch on abstract and concrete utopia. *Utopian Studies, 1*(2), 13–26. http://www.jstor.org/stable/20718998

Lewin, K. (1947). Frontiers in group dynamics: Concept, method and reality in social science; social equilibria and social change. *Human Relations, 1*(1), 5–41. https://doi.org/10.1177/001872674700100103

Lewis, A. E. (2004). What group? Studying whites and whiteness in the era of color-blindness. *Sociological Theory, 22*(4), 623–646. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0735-2751.2004.00237.x

Lipman, P. (2018). Segregation, the “Black spatial imagination,” and radical social transformation. *Democracy and Education, 26*(2), 9. https://democracyeducationjournal.org/home/vol26/iss2/9/

Lipsitz, G. (1998). *The possessive investment in whiteness: How white people profit from identity politics*. Temple University Press

Litz, D. (2011). Globalization and the changing face of educational leadership: Current trends & emerging dilemmas. *International Education Studies, 4*(3). https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v4n3p47

Locke, L. A. (2017). What’s in your wallet? Not much green, but a whole lotta white. *Whiteness and Education, 2*(1), 32–47.

Locke, L. A. & Getachew, E. (2019). Understanding stubborn inequities: A critical lesson in history. *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy, 10*(2). https://libjournal.uncg.edu/ijcp/article/view/1899

López, F., & Sleeter, C. E. (2023). *Critical race theory and its critics: Implications for research and teaching*. Teachers College Press.

López, G. R. (2003). The (racially neutral) politics of education: A critical race theory perspective. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 39*(1), 68–94. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X02239761

Love, B. L. (2019). *We want to do more than survive: Abolitionist teaching and the pursuit of educational freedom*. Beacon Press.

Lynn, M., Yosso, T. J., Solórzano, D. G., & Parker, L. (2002). Critical race theory and education: Qualitative research in the new millennium. *Qualitative Inquiry, 8*(1), 3–6. https://doi-org.sandiego.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/1077800402008001001

MacDonald Gibson, J., DeFelice, N., Sebastian, D., & Leker, H. (2014). Racial disparities in access to community water supply service in Wake County, North Carolina. *Frontiers in Public Health Services and Systems Research*, *3*(3), 6. https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2014.10412e45.1

Makaiau, A. S., Halagao, P. E., & Thao, G. (2023). Creating transformative leaders of social justice in education. *Multicultural Perspectives*, *25*(1), 52–59. https://doi.org/10.1080/15210960.2022.2136181

Manning, P. (1990). The slave trade: The formal demography of a global system. *Social Science History*, *14*(2), 255. https://doi.org/10.2307/1171441

Marable, M. (1984). *Race, reform and rebellion* (Vol. 84). University Press of Mississippi.

Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. ASCD.

Mason, J. L. (1995). *Cultural competence self-assessment questionnaire: A manual for users*. Multicultural Initiative Project. https://www.pathwaysrtc.pdx.edu/pdf/CCSAQ.pdf

Masten, P. (2022, August 24). 'Whoever wins gets our kids': Fiery NC school board race mirrors national fight. *The Charlotte Observer*. https://www.charlotteobserver.com/opinion/article264528486.html

Mathieu, J. E., Gilson, L. L., & Ruddy, T. M. (2006). Empowerment and team effectiveness: An empirical test of an integrated model. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *91*(1), 97–108. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.91.1.97

Mayo, P. (2014). Gramsci and the politics of education. *Capital & Class*, *38*(2), 385–398. https://doi.org/10.1177/0309816814533170

McCarty, T. L. (2018). Twelfth annual brown lecture in education research: So that any child may succeed: Indigenous pathways toward justice and the promise of Brown. *Educational Researcher*, *47*(5), 271–283. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X18768549

McColl, A. (2020, February 17). *Everything you need to know about the Leandro litigation*. EducationNC. https://www.ednc.org/leandro-litigation/

McConahay, J. B. (1986). Modern racism, ambivalence, and the Modern Racism Scale. In J. F. Dovidio & S. L. Gaertner (Eds.), *Prejudice, discrimination, and racism* (pp. 91–125). Academic Press.

McFarland, S. (2015). Culture, individual differences, and support for human rights: A general review. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, *21*(1), 10–27. https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000083

McKay, J., & Devlin, M. (2016). 'Low income doesn't mean stupid and destined for failure': Challenging the deficit discourse around students from low SES backgrounds in higher education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, *20*(4), 347–363. https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2015.1079273

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education: Revised and expanded from case study research in education*. Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.

Michalopoulos, S., & Papaioannou, E. (2013). Pre-colonial ethnic institutions and contemporary African development. *Econometrica*, *81*(1), 113–152. http://www.jstor.org/stable/23357265

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. SAGE Publications.

Miller, D. (2001). *Principles of social justice*. Harvard University Press.

Miller, R., Liu, K., & Ball, A. F. (2020). Critical counter-narrative as transformative methodology for educational equity. *Review of Research in Education, 44*(1), 269–300. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X20908501

Milner IV, H. R. (2007). Race, culture, and researcher positionality: Working through dangers seen, unseen, and unforeseen. *Educational Researcher,* 36(7), 388–400. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X07309471

Milner IV, H. R. (2010). *Start where you are, but don't stay there: Understanding diversity, opportunity gaps, and teaching in today's classrooms*. Harvard Education Press.

Milner IV, H. R. (2012). Beyond a test score: Explaining opportunity gaps in educational practice. *Journal of Black Studies, 43*(6), 693–718. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23414665

Milner IV, H. R. (2013a). Analyzing poverty, learning, and teaching through a critical race theory lens. *Review of Research in Education, 37*(1), 1–53. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X12459720

Milner IV, H. R. (2013b). Rethinking achievement gap talk in urban education. *Urban Education, 48*(1), 3–8. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085912470417

Milner IV, H. R., & Howard, T. C. (2013). Counter-narrative as method: Race, policy and research for teacher education. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 16*(4), 536–561.

Mitchell, T. (2015). *North Carolina's greatest challenge: Widespread struggles remain a grave threat to economic growth and us all*. https://www.nccourts.gov/assets/inline-files/civil-

justice-BTC-Report_North-Carolinas-Greatest-Challenge.pdf?_NcUGieZxDK3X60auVMnEb1v_QrMAo7D

Mobley, J. A. (1986). In the shadow of white society: Princeville, a black town in North Carolina, 1865–1915. *The North Carolina Historical Review*, *63*(3), 340–384. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23518785

Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory Into Practice*, *31*(2), 132–141. http://www.jstor.org/stable/1476399

Montanari, A., & Vecchione, C. (Eds.). (2016). *North Carolina school improvement planning implementation guide.* North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. https://www.dpi.nc.gov/documents/fbs/charterschools/planning/sip-guide/download

Moolenaar, N. M., Daly, A. J., & Sleegers, P. J. (2010). Transformational leadership as a precursor of teacher quality: Its influences on fostering learning conditions in schools. *Review of Educational Research*, *80*(3), 358–388.

Morgan, D., & Zeffane, R. (2003). Employee involvement, organizational change and trust in management. *International Journal of Human Resource Management, 14*(1), 55–75. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190210158510

Morrow, R., & Torres, C. A. (2002). *Reading ere ire & Habermas: Critical pedagogy and transformative social change*. Teachers College Press.

Mundy, K., & Manion, C. (2014). Globalization and global governance in education. In N. P. Stromquist, & K. Monkman (Eds.), *Globalization and education: Integration and contestation across cultures*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Murphey. (1916) *Mr. Murphey's report on education*. United States.

Murphy, M. K. (2022, June 24). School board strategic plan review turns to “divisive” wording. *The Pilot Newspaper*. https://www.thepilot.com/news/school-board-strategic-plan-review-turns-to-divisive-wording/article_57e11d80-f3f1-11ec-8c0f-0b56945ab075.html

Nahapiet, J., & Ghoshal, S. (1998). Social capital, intellectual capital, and the organizational advantage. *Academy of Management Review*, *23*(2), 242–266. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1998.533225

Nam, R., Lenderman, K., & Booze, E. (2022). The impact of racial socialization on diversity, equity, and inclusion facilitation: A critical collaborative autoethnography among diversity, equity, and inclusion teacher-educators. *Multicultural Perspectives*, *24*(1), 14–21. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1348603

Neufeld, R. (2019, March 3). Visiting our past: Convict labor built the railroads here. *The Asheville Citizen Times*. https://www.citizen-times.com/story/life/2019/03/03/visiting-our-past-convict-labor-built-railroads-here/2992778002/

Newsome, A. R., & Lefler, H. T. (1973). *North Carolina: The history of a southern state.* University of North Carolina Press.

Newsreel, C. (2015, April 2). *Watch the road to brown online* [Video]. Vimeo on Demand. https://vimeo.com/ondemand/roadtobrown

Nieto, S., & Bode, P. (2012). School reform and student learning. In J. A. Banks & C. A. McGee Banks (Eds.), *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (pp. 267–283). Wiley.

Noguera, P. A. (2003). *City schools and the American dream: Reclaiming the promise of public education* (Vol. 17). Teachers College Press.

Noguera, P. A. (2008). Creating schools where race does not predict achievement: The role and significance of race in the racial achievement gap. *The Journal of Negro Education, 77*(2), 90–103. https://www.jstor.org/stable/25608673

Noguera, P. A. (2014). Anything but black: Bringing politics back to the study of race. In J. M. Rahier & P. Hintzen (Eds.), *Problematizing Blackness* (pp. 193–200). Routledge.

Noguera, P. A., Pierce, J., & Ahram, R. (Eds.). (2015). *Race, equity, and education: Sixty years from Brown*. Springer.

Nordstrom, K. (2020, September 5). *Judge Howard Manning's misguided views on education should also be retired*. NC Newsline. https://ncnewsline.com/briefs/judge-howard-mannings-misguided-views-on-education-should-also-be-retired/

Nordstrom, K., & Tillitski, L. (2021, August 3). *School performance grades: A legislative tool for stigmatizing non-white schools a legislative tool for stigmatizing non-white schools*. North Carolina Justice Center. https://www.ncjustice.org/publications/school-performance-grades-a-legislative-tool-for-stigmatizing-non-white-schools/

North Carolina Advisory Committee on Education. (1950). *The Pearsall Plan to save our schools*. Governor's Special Advisory Committee on Education. https://archive.org/details/pearsallplantosa00nort

North Carolina elections. (2023). Ballotpedia. https://ballotpedia.org/North_Carolina

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (1993). *The history of education in North Carolina*. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED369713

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (2019). State Board of Education 2025 Statewide Strategic Plan. https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=10399&AID=185238&MID=5641

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (2021a). *Truitt introduces teacher leadership council* [Press release]. https://www.dpi.nc.gov/news/press-releases/2021/11/09/truitt-introduces-teacher-leadership-council

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (2022). *Technical guide for school accountability and testing results*. https://www.dpi.nc.gov/ncdpi-school-grade-technical-guide/open

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (2023, April 21). *NC Superintendent Catherine Truitt has transformed the landscape for the support of principals. Her initiatives and her policies have amplified* [Image attached] [Post]. LinkedIn. https://www.linkedin.com/posts/north-carolina-department-of-public-instruction_nc-superintendent-catherine-truitt-has-transformed-activity-7055195024136794112-Iqkk?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop

North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. (n.d.). *State Board of Education*. https://www.dpi.nc.gov/about-dpi/state-board-education

North Carolina General Assembly. (2002). *Slaves and Free Persons of Color. An Act Concerning Slaves and Free Persons of Color: Revised code--No. 105.* https://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/slavesfree/slavesfree.html. (Original work published 1831)

North Carolina Public Schools [@ncpublicschools]. (2023, April 21). *@CTruittNCDPI has transformed the support of principals through her initiatives & policies, amplifying the importance of principals as true change* [Image attached] [Post]. X. https://x.com/ncpublicschools/status/1649427541139005440?s=20

North Carolina School Boards Association. (2023). *NCSBA legislative update*. https://www.ncsba.org/2023/04/ncsba-legislative-update-april-21-2023/

North Carolina State Board of Education. (2020). *Draft: North Carolina State Board of Education: A resolution to support equity and excellence in North Carolina public education*. https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=10399&AID=232225&MID=7518

North Carolina State Board of Education. (2021). *ARP ESSER NC plan 05-20-21 draft*. https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=10399&AID=268034&MID=9387

North Carolina Transportation Museum. (2020, August 25). *Safe bus company*. https://www.nctransportationmuseum.org/safe-bus-company/

Nunn, N. (2008). The long-term effects of Africa's slave trades. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *123*(1), 139–176. https://doi.org/10.1162/qjec.2008.123.1.139

Nunn, N. (2017). Understanding the long-run effects of Africa's slave trades. *The long economic and political shadow of history*, *2*, 36–48.

Nussbaum, M. C. (2011). *Creating capabilities: The human development approach*. Harvard University Press.

O'Day, J. A., & Smith, M. S. (2016). Quality and equality in American education: Systemic problems, systemic solutions. In I. Kirsch & H. Braun (Eds.), *The dynamics of opportunity in America: Evidence and perspectives* (pp. 297–358). Springer.

Oakes, J., Lipton, M., & Rogers, J. (2006). *Learning power: Organizing for education and justice.* Teachers College Press.

Ohmae, K. (1995). *The end of the nation state: the rise of regional economies*. Free Press.

Oldham, G. R., & Hackman, J. R. (1981). Relationships between organizational structure and employee reactions: Comparing alternative frameworks. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *26*(1), 66–83. https://doi.org/10.2307/2392600

Orlikowski, W. J. (1996). Improvising organizational transformation over time: A situated change perspective. *Information Systems Research*, *7*(1), 63–92. https://doi.org/10.1287/isre.7.1.63

Overly, N. V. (1970). *The unstudied curriculum: Its impact on children*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED043577.pdf

Palumbo, D. J., & Styskal, R. A. (1974). Professionalism and receptivity to change. *American Journal of Political Science*, *18*(2), 385–394. https://doi.org/10.2307/2110708

Parker, L., & Villalpando, O. (2007). A race(cialized) perspective on education leadership: Critical race theory in educational administration. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *43*(5), 519–524. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X07307795

Pasadena City Bd. of Education v. Spangler, 427 U.S. 424, 96 S. Ct. 2697 (1976)

Patel, R. A. (2017). *Measuring cultural competency in educators: The educators scale of student diversity* [Doctoral dissertation, Seattle Pacific University]. Digital Commons @ SPU. https://digitalcommons.spu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1031&context=soe_etd

Patton, M. Q. (2002). Two decades of developments in qualitative inquiry: A personal, experiential perspective. *Qualitative Social Work, 1*(3), 261–283. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473325002001003636

Paul, E. (2019, December 11). A state at risk: Critical investments in North Carolina's public schools are urgently needed to ensure each child receives a sound basic education. *Public School Forum*. https://www.ncforum.org/2019/a-state-at-risk-critical-investments-in-north-carolinas-public-schools-are-urgently-needed-to-ensure-each-child-receives-a-sound-basic-education/

Pearsall, T., Joyner, W. T., Huffman, R. O., Medford, W., Philpott, H. C., Yarborough, E. F., & Ellis, T. F. (1956). *The Pearsall plan to save our schools*. https://ia800402.us.archive.org/26/items/pearsallplantosa00nort/pearsallplantosa00nort.pdf

Peebles-Wilkins, W. (1987). Reactions of segments of the black community to the North Carolina Pearsall Plan, 1954–1966. *Phylon (1960–), 48*(2), 112–121. https://doi.org/10.2307/274775

Perry, D. J. (2015). Transcendent pluralism. *Advances in Nursing Science*, *38*(4), 317–329. https://doi.org/10.1097/ANS.0000000000000086

Pettigrew, A. M., Woodman, R. W., & Cameron, K. S. (2001). Studying organizational change and development: Challenges for future research. *Academy of Management Journal*, *44*(4), 697–713. https://journals.aom.org/doi/abs/10.5465/3069411

Phinney, J. S. (1992). The multigroup ethnic identity measure: A new scale for use with diverse groups. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 7*(2), 156–176. https://doi.org/10.1177/074355489272003

Pierce, J. L., Gardner, D. G., & Dunham, R. B. (2002). Management organizational change and development. *Management and Organizational Behavior: An Integrated Perspective*, *18*, 627–657.

Pinot de Moira, A., Meadows, M., & Baird, J. A. (2020). The SES equity gap and the reform from modular to linear GCSE mathematics. *British Educational Research Journal*, *46*(2), 421–436. https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3585

Pirson, M. (2017). *Humanistic management: Protecting dignity and promoting well-being* (No. 17-45). Cambridge University Press.

Plessy v. Ferguson, 163 U.S. 537, 16 S. Ct. 1138 (1896)

Plummer, B. L. (1970). Benjamin Rush and the Negro. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, *127*(6), 793–798. https://doi.org/10.1176/ajp.127.6.793

Pollack, T. M. (2009). *Racialized school narratives: Unpacking "teacher talk" about students of color and their families*. Mills College.

Pollack, T. M. (2013). Unpacking everyday "teacher talk" about students and families of color: Implications for teacher and school leader development. *Urban Education*, *48*(6), 863–894. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085912457789

Pratt, J. M., & Yezierski, E. J. (2018). Characterizing the landscape: Collegiate organizations' chemistry outreach practices. *Journal of Chemical Education*, *95*(1), 7–16. https://doi.org/10.1021/acs.jchemed.7b00627

Purifoy, D. M., & Seamster, L. (2021). Creative extraction: Black towns in white space. *Society and Space*, *39*(1), 47–66. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263775820968563

Quattrone, P., & Hopper, T. (2001). What does organizational change mean? Speculations on a taken for granted category. *Management Accounting Research*, *12*(4), 403–435. https://doi.org/10.1006/mare.2001.0176

QuickFacts: North Carolina. (2022). Census Bureau QuickFacts; United States Census Bureau. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/nc

Rachmuth, S. (2021, August 31). Why are we allowing a vindictive Marxist lead North Carolina's public school system? *Education First NC*. https://www.edfirstnc.org/post/why-are-we-allowing-a-vindictive-marxist-lead-north-carolina-s-public-school-system

Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice* (Original ed.). Harvard University Press.

Reardon, S. F. (2013). The widening income achievement gap. *Educational leadership*, *70*(8), 10–16. https://stonecenter.gc.cuny.edu/files/2022/09/Conwell-2.pdf

Reitz, T. (2017). Academic hierarchies in neo-feudal capitalism: How status competition processes trust and facilitates the appropriation of knowledge. *Higher Education*, *73*(6), 871–886. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-017-0115-3

Reygadas, R. (1998). *Opening paths: Public and social initiatives of civil society networks*. Convergencia de Organismos Civiles por la Democracia.

Rice, J. K. (2010, August). *The impact of teacher experience: Examining the evidence and policy implications*. National Center for Analysis of Longitudinal Data in Education Research. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED511988.pdf

Rivage-Seul, D. M. (1992). Berea at the crossroads. *CrossCurrents*, *42*(1), 65–74. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24459276

Rivas-Drake, D., Seaton, E. K., Markstrom, C., Quintana, S., Syed, M., Lee, R. M., Schwartz, S. J., Umaña-Taylor, A. J., French, S., & Yip, T. (2014). Ethnic and racial identity in adolescence: Implications for psychosocial, academic, and health outcomes. *Child Development*, *85*(1), 40–57. https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12200

Robinson, V. M., Lloyd, C. A., & Rowe, K. J. (2008). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership types. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *44*(5), 635–674. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X08321509. (Original work published 1992)

Rolle, A., Houck, E. A., & McColl, A. (2008). And poor children continue to wait: An analysis of horizontal and vertical equity among North Carolina school districts in the face of judicially mandated policy restraints 1996–2006. *Journal of Education Finance*, 75–102. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40704346

Rosales, F. A. (1996). *Chicano! The history of the Mexican American civil rights movement*. Arte Publico Press.

Rosenbaum, D., More, E., & Steane, P. (2018). Planned organizational change management: Forward to the past? An exploratory literature review. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *31*(2), 286–303. https://doi.org/10.1108/JOCM-06-2015-0089

Rosenberg, M. (1989). *Society and the adolescent self-image* (Rev. ed.). Wesleyan University Press.

Rothstein, R. (2017). Class and the classroom: Even the best schools can't close the race achievement gap. In A. R. Sadovnik, P. Cookson, Jr., S. Semel, & R. Coughlan (Eds.), *Exploring education* (5th ed., pp. 345–350). Routledge.

Rousseau, J. J. (1968). *The social contract*. Penguin Books. (Original work published 1762)

Roy, E. & Ford, J. E. (2019, August 11). *Deep rooted: A brief history of race and education in North Carolina*. EducationNC. https://www.ednc.org/deep-rooted-a-brief-history-of-race-and-education-in-north-carolina/

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2000). Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist, 55*(1), 68–78. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68

Ryan, W. (1976). *Blaming the victim* (Vol. 226). Vintage.

Rycroft-Malone, J., Harvey, G., Seers, K., Kitson, A., McCormack, B., & Titchen, A. (2004). An exploration of the factors that influence the implementation of evidence into practice. *Journal of Clinical Nursing, 13*(8), 913–924. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2702.2004.01007.x

Sallach, D. L. (1974). Class domination and ideological hegemony. *The Sociological Quarterly, 15*(1), 38–50. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.1974.tb02126.x

Savage, G. C. (2016). Think tanks, education and elite policy actors. *The Australian Educational Researcher, 43*, 35–53. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-015-0185-0

Scheetz, M., & Senge, P. (2016, February 18). *Systemic change and equity*. Equity-Centered Capacity Building: Essential Approaches for Excellence & Sustainable School System Transformation. https://capacitybuildingnetwork.org/article3/

Schultz, T.W. (1993) The economic importance of human capital in modernization. *Education Economics, 1*, 13–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/09645299300000003

Schwandt, T. A., & Gates, E. F. (2017). Case study methodology. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed., pp. XX–XX). SAGE Publications.

Sen, A. (1993). Money and value: On the ethics and economics of finance. *Economics & Philosophy*, *9*(2), 203–227. https://doi.org/10.1017/S026626710000153X

Sen, A. (2000). *'Social exclusion: concept, application, and scrutiny.'* Asian Development Bank. http://hdl.handle.net/11540/2339

Shapiro, S. (2014). "Words that you said got bigger": English language learners' lived experiences of deficit discourse. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 386–406. https://www.jstor.org/stable/24398689

Shea, C. M., Jacobs, S. R., Esserman, D. A., Bruce, K., & Weiner, B. J. (2014). Organizational readiness for implementing change: a psychometric assessment of a new measure. *Implementation Science*, *9*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-9-7

Shields, C. M. (2010). Transformative leadership: Working for equity in diverse contexts. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *46*(4), 558–589. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X10375609

Shields, C. M. (2011). Transformative leadership: An introduction. *Counterpoints*, 1–17.

Singleton, G. E. (2014). *Courageous conversations about race: A field guide for achieving equity in schools*. Corwin Press.

Shields, C. M. (2011a). Fostering school-led improvement: The role of transformative leadership. *School Leadership & Management*, *31*(2), 95–113. https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/cslm20

Shields, C. M. (2011b). Transformative leadership: An introduction. *Counterpoints*, *409*, 1–17. https://www.jstor.org/stable/42981292

Shields, C. M. (2015). From paradigm wars to transformative leadership: Can educational administration foster socially just schools? In B. J. Porfilio, D. J. Wolken, N. D. Hartlep, & L. W.-W. (Eds.), *The SoJo Journal* (pp. 1–22). Information Age Publishing.

Shields, C. M. (2016). *Transformative leadership primer*. Peter Lang.

Shields, C. M. (2017a). Is transformative leadership practical or possible? Learning from superintendents about social justice. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, *45*(2). http://journalseek.net/cgi-bin/journalseek/journalsearch.cgi?field=issn&query=1324-1702

Shields, C. M. (2017b). *Transformative leadership in education: Equitable and socially just change in an uncertain and complex world*. Routledge.

Shields, C. M. (2018). *Transformative leadership in education: Equitable change in an uncertain and complex world* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Shields, C. M. (2019). *Becoming a transformative leader: A guide to creating equitable schools*. Routledge.

Shields, C. M. (2020). Transformative leadership. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education.* https://oxfordre.com/education/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.001.0001/acrefore-9780190264093-e-632

Shields, C. M., & Hesbol, K. A. (2020). Transformative leadership approaches to inclusion, equity, and social justice. *Journal of School Leadership, 30*(1), 3–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/1052684619873343

Siddle-Walker, V., & Johnson, G. E. (2017). African American school leaders: Critical race theory and leadership preparation. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 53*(2), 282–315. https://journals.sagepub.com/home/eaq

Singleton, G. E. (2014). *Courageous conversations about race: A field guide for achieving equity in schools*. Corwin Press.

Sleeter, C. (2019). Introduction to "Emerging from standardization: Learning to teach for cultural, cognitive, and community relevance." *The Educational Forum*, *83*(3), 231–236. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131725.2019.1599643

Smith, K. L., & Torppa, C. B. (2010). Creating the capacity for organizational change: Personnel participation and receptivity to change. *Journal of Extension*, *48*(4), Article 1. https://doi.org/10.34068/joe.48.04.01

Smith, P. A. (2019). *Leading while Black and male: A phenomenology of Black male school leadership*. Columbia University.

Smith, P. A. (2021). Black male school leaders: Protectors and defenders of children, community, culture, and village. *Journal of School Leadership*, *31*(1–2), 29–49. https://doi.org/10.1177/1052684621993051

Solórzano, D. G. (1997). Images and words that wound: Critical race theory, racial stereotyping, and teacher education. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *24*(3), 5–19. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23478088

Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2001). From racial stereotyping and deficit discourse toward a critical race theory in teacher education. *Multicultural Education*, *9*(1), 2–8. https://www.proquest.com/openview/609e623d6ca96579a13ebc25bad06813/1

Solórzano, D. G., & Yosso, T. J. (2002). Critical race methodology: Counter-storytelling as an analytical framework for education research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *8*(1), 23–44. https://doi.org/10.1177/107780040200800103

Solórzano, R. W. (2008). High stakes testing: Issues, implications, and remedies for English language learners. *Review of Educational Research, 78*(2), 260–329. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308317845

Spector, H. (2017). Cultivating the ethical imagination in education: Perspectives from three public intellectuals. *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies, 39*(1), 39–59. https://doi.org/10.1080/10714413.2017.1262157

Spillane, J. P., Reiser, B. J., & Reimer, T. (2002). Policy implementation and cognition: Reframing and refocusing implementation research. *Review of Educational Research, 72*(3), 387–431. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543072003387

Steele, C. M. (2011). *Whistling Vivaldi: And other clues to how stereotypes affect us (issues of our time).* W. W. Norton & Company.

Stetler, C. B., Damschroder, L. J., Helfrich, C. D., & Hagedorn, H. J. (2011). A guide for applying a revised version of the PARIHS framework for implementation. *Implementation Science, 6*(1), Article 99. https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-6-99

Stobierski, T. (2020, January 21). What is organizational change management? *Business Insights*. https://online.hbs.edu/blog/post/organizational-change-management#:~:text=Organizational%20change%20refers%20to%20the

Stoddart, M. C. (2007). Ideology, hegemony, discourse: A critical review of theories of knowledge and power. *Social Thought & Research, 28,* 191–225. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23252126

Strange, S. (1996). *The retreat of the state: The diffusion of power in the world economy*. Cambridge University Press.

Superior Court Division 95-CVS-1158, G. C. of J. (2021, March 15). *State of North Carolina comprehensive remedial plan*. https://www.ncforum.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/March-2021-CRP.pdf

Swanson, R. A., & Holton, E. F. (2005). *Research in organizations: Foundations and methods in inquiry*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Swartz, D. (1997). *Culture & power: The sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*. University of Chicago Press.

Swedberg, R. (2005). Can there be a sociological concept of interest? *Theory and Society*, *34*, 359–390. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-005-1986-3

Takaki, R. (2012). *Different mirror: A history of multicultural America (revised edition).* Back Bay Books. (Original work published 1993)

Tate, W. F., IV. (1997). Critical race theory and education: History, theory, and implications. *Review of Research in Education*, *22*(1), 195–247. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X022001195

Taylor, P. C., & Medina, M. (2011). Educational research paradigms: From positivism to pluralism. *College Research Journal*, *1*(1), 1–16. https://researchportal.murdoch.edu.au/esploro/outputs/journalArticle/Educational-research-paradigms-From-positivism-to/991005540537707891

Taylor, P. C., & Medina, M. (2011). Educational research paradigms: From positivism to pluralism. *College Research Journal*, *1*(1), 1–16.

Theoharis, G. (2007). Social justice educational leaders and resistance: Toward a theory of social justice leadership. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *43*(2), 221–258. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X06293717

Thomas, G. P. (2009). Metacognition or not? Confronting hegemonies. In I. M. Saleh & M. S. Khine (Eds.), *Fostering scientific habits of mind* (pp. 83–105). Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789087909239_006

Thompson, K. (2015). *The transformationalist view of globalization*. Revise Sociology. https://revisesociology.com/2015/09/24/transformationalist-globalization/

Tienken, C. H. (2011). Structured inequity: The intersection of socio-economic status and the standard error of measurement of state mandated high school test results. In B. J. Alford, G. Perreault, L, Zellner, & J. W. Ballenger (Eds.), *Blazing new trails: Preparing leaders to improve access and equity in today's school* (pp. 257–271). National Council of Professors of Educational Administration. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED523595.pdf#page=271

Tikly, L. (2001). Globalisation and education in the postcolonial world: Towards a conceptual framework. *Comparative Education*, *37*(2), 151–171. https://doi.org/10.1080/03050060124481

Torres-Harding, S., Torres, L., & Yeo, E. (2019). Depression and perceived stress as mediators between racial microaggressions and somatic symptoms in college students of color. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *90*(1), 125–135. https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000408

Towler-Evans, I., & Edmiston, B. (2022). *Humanizing education with dramatic inquiry: In dialogue with Dorothy Heathcote's transformative pedagogy*. Taylor & Francis.

Tuck, H., & Silverman, T. (2016). *The counter-narrative handbook*. Institute for Strategic Dialogue. https://www.jugendundmedien.ch/fileadmin/PDFs/anderes/schwerpunkt_Radikalisierung/Counter-narrative-Handbook_1.pdf

Turner, V. W., & Bruner, E. M. (Eds.). (1986). *The anthropology of experience*. University of Illinois Press.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2020). *Poverty.* Economic Research Service. https://data.ers.usda.gov/reports.aspx?ID=17826

Valencia, R. R. (2010). *Dismantling contemporary deficit thinking: Educational thought and practice*. Routledge.

Valencia, R. R. (Ed.). (1997). *The evolution of deficit thinking: Educational thought and practice*. The Falmer Press.

Van Ryzin, M. J., Gravely, A. A., & Roseth, C. J. (2009). Autonomy, belongingness, and engagement in school as contributors to adolescent psychological well-being. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *38*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-007-9257-4

Vélez-Ibáñez, C. G., & Greenberg, J. B. (1992). *Schooling processes among US Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans: A comparative, distributive, and case study approach*. (ED3477022). ERIC. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED347022.pdf

Villar, R. B., Yazon, A. D., Tan, C. S., Buenvinida, L. P., & Bandoy, M. M. (2021). School heads' leadership practices in the new normal, administrative disposition, and readiness of the public schools in Laguna. *International Journal of Theory and Application in Elementary and Secondary School Education*, *3*(2), 156–170. https://doi.org/10.31098/ijtaese.v3i2.683

Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002). Preparing culturally responsive teachers: Rethinking the curriculum. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *53*(1), 20–32. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487102053001003

Vroom, V. H., & Yetton, P. W. (1973). *Leadership and decision-making* (Vol. 110). University of Pittsburgh Press.

Waheed, Z., Hussin, S., & Bin Megat Daud, M. A. K. (2018). The best practices for school transformation: A multiple-case study. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *56*(1), 88–103. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-11-2016-0136

Walker, V. S. (2000). *Their highest potential: An African American school community in the segregated south*. University of North Carolina Press.

Walter, J. S. (2018). Global perspectives: Making the shift from multiculturalism to culturally responsive teaching. *General Music Today*, *31*(2), 24–28. https://doi.org/10.1177/1048371317720262

Walton, F. C., & Caliendo, S. M. (2020). Origins of the concept of race. In S. Caliendo & C. McIlwain (Eds.), *The Routledge companion to race and ethnicity* (2nd ed., pp. 9–17). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429058608

Walzer, M. (2008). *Spheres of justice: A defense of pluralism and equality*. Basic Books. (Original work published 1984)

Ward v. Flood, 48 Cal. 36 (Cal. 1874)

Warren, C. A., & Coles, J. A. (2020). Trading spaces: Antiblackness and reflections on Black education futures. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *53*(3), 382–398. https://doi.org/10.1080/10665684.2020.1764882

Warren, C. A., & Mapp, K. L. (2011). A self-study of critical race theory in education: From theory to practice. *Teachers College Record*, *113*(11), 2663–2692. https://journals.sagepub.com/home/tcz

Watkins, W. H. (2001). *The white architects of black education: Ideology and power in America, 1865–1954*. Teachers College Press.

Waugh, R. F., & Punch, K. F. (1987). Teacher receptivity to systemwide change in the implementation stage. *Review of Educational Research, 57*(3), 237–254. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543057003237

Weber, P. S., & Manning, M. R. (2001). Cause maps, sensemaking, and planned organizational change. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 37*(2), 227–251. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021886301372006

Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations* (Vol. 3). SAGE Publications.

Weiner, B. J. (2009). A theory of organizational readiness for change. *Implementation Science, 4*(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-4-67

Weiner, B. J., Clary, A. S., Klaman, S. L., Turner, K., & Alishahi-Tabriz, A. (2020). Organizational readiness for change: What we know, what we think we know, and what we need to know. In B. Albers, A. Shlonsky, & R. Mildon (Eds.), *Implementation science 3.0* (pp. 101–144). Springer.

Weiner, L. (2003). Why is classroom management so vexing to urban teachers? *Theory Into Practice, 42*(4), 305–312. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4204_7

Weiss, L. (1998). *The myth of the powerless state*. Cornell University Press.

WestEd, Learning Policy Institute, & Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at North Carolina State University. (2019). *Sound basic education for all: An action plan for North Carolina*. WestEd.

Wilson, A., Almerico, G. M., Johnston, P., & Ensmann, S. (2020). Examining educational leadership dispositions: A valid and reliable assessment of leadership dispositions. *International Journal of Educational Leadership Preparation*, *15*(1), 17–28. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1254584.pdf

Wilson, S. M., & Anagnostopoulos, D. (2021). Methodological guidance paper: The craft of conducting a qualitative review. *Review of Educational Research*, *91*(5), 651–670. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543211012755

Wirth, L. (1941). Morale and minority groups. *American Journal of Sociology*, *47*(3), 415–433. www.jstor.org/stable/2769291

Witcher, S. (2013). Social justice. In S. Witcher (Ed.), *Inclusive equality: A vision for social justice* (pp. 31–62). Bristol University Press. www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qgn28.6

Woodson, C. G. (1933). *The mis-education of the negro*. Associated Publishers. https://www.jpanafrican.org/ebooks/3.4eBookThe%20Mis-Education.pdf

Yazan, B. (2015). Three approaches to case study methods in education: Yin, Merriam, and Stake. *The Qualitative Report*, *20*(2), 134–152. http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR20/2/yazan1.pdf

Youniss, J., & Yates, M. (1997). *Community service and social responsibility in youth*. University of Chicago Press.

Zirkel, S., & Pollack, T. M. (2016). “Just let the worst students go”: A critical case analysis of public discourse about race, merit, and worth. *American Educational Research Journal*, *53*(6), 1522–1555. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216676568

APPENDIX A

NC STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION 2025 STATEWIDE STRATEGIC PLAN 2019–2025

Goal I-Eliminate opportunity gaps by 2025

- Objective 1-Decrease the number of exclusionary discipline practices by subgroup (suspensions and expulsions)
- Objective 2-Improve school climate measures across all schools and grade levels
    - Component 1-Increase the number of school-based mental health professionals.
    - Component 2-Increase opportunities to develop healthy habits in students
    - Component 3-Increase the number of schools and districts utilizing innovative "Breakfast After the Bell, Summer Meals, and At-Risk Afterschool Meals" programs to keep students fed, healthy and engaged
- Objective 3-Increase percentage of 4-year old children enrolled in state Pre-K from 22% to 34% (above the current national average)
- Objective 4-Decrease the high school dropout rate for each subgroup
    - Component 1-Increase average composite score on state-mandated college entrance exam
    - Component 2-Increase access, readiness, and attainment of early postsecondary opportunities (EPSOs), such as AP, IB, CTE, dual credit/enrollment, work-based learning, apprenticeships
- Objective 6-Increase the number of educators of color in schools across North Carolina
- Objective 7-Increase the number of charter schools providing equitable access to economically disadvantaged students or reflecting the LEA in which they are located

Goal II-Improve school and district performance by 2025

- Objective 1-Allocate financial, business and technology resources according to State and Federal laws and State Board of Education policies
- Objective 2-Increase the percentage of Grades 3–8 math and ELA EOG subgroup test scores meeting the ESSA Yearly Measures of Interim Progress
- Objective 3-Increase the percentage of students proficient in math by subgroup
- Objective 4-Increase the percentage of students proficient in reading by the end of 3rd grade
- Objective 5-Increase the percentage of high school reading subgroup test scores meeting the ESSA Yearly Measures of Interim Progress
- Objective 6-Increase the percentage of students proficient in science by subgroup
- Objective 7-Increase number of schools meeting or exceeding growth measure by subgroup
    - Component 1-Increase the percentage of schools with charter-like flexibilities (Innovative Schools, Innovation Zones, Restart Schools, Renewal School Districts, Lab Schools) meeting or exceeding annual expected growth
- Objective 8-Increase the number of charter schools meeting or exceeding academic, operational, and financial goals
- Objective 9-Increase the number of qualified and well-prepared principals in every school

Goal III-Increase educator preparedness to meet the needs of every student by 2025

- Objective 1-Increase the number of culturally relevant, equity-focused resources for educators
- Objective 2-Increase the number of mentors available to beginning educators
- Objective 3-Strengthen relationships between educator preparation programs (EPPs), districts, and schools to foster collaboration and better teaching practice
- Objective 4-Increase opportunities for educator engagement inside and outside of school

APPENDIX B

GOAL I THROUGH III OF NC STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION 2025 STATEWIDE STRATEGIC PLAN AND *LEANDRO* COMPREHENSIVE REMEDIAL PLAN ADOPTED BY NC IN 2019

Goal I: Eliminate opportunity gaps by 2025	
NCSBE Strategic Plan	**Leandro Comprehensive Remedial Plan Element**
Objective 1 - Decrease the number of exclusionary discipline practices by subgroup (suspensions and expulsions)	• **A Well Prepared, High Quality, and Supported Teacher in Every Classroom** • **A Well Prepared, High Quality, and Supported Principal in Every School**
Objective 2 - Improve school climate measures across all schools and grade levels • **Component 1** - Increase the number of school-based mental health professionals. • **Component 2** - Increase opportunities to develop healthy habits in students • **Component 3** - Increase the number of schools and districts utilizing innovative "Breakfast After the Bell, Summer Meals, and At-Risk Afterschool Meals" programs to keep students fed, healthy and engaged	• **A Well Prepared, High Quality, and Supported Principal in Every School** • **A Finance System that Provides Adequate, Equitable, and Efficient Resources** • **An Assistance and Turnaround Function that Provides Necessary Support to Low-Performing Schools and Districts** ○ **Component 5:** An assistance and turnaround function that provides necessary support to low-performing schools and districts ■ **Action 3:** Provide resources, opportunities, and supports for low-performing and high-poverty schools to address out of school barriers to learning using a community schools or other evidence-based approach.
Objective 3 - Increase percentage of 4-year old children enrolled in state Pre-K from 22% to 34% (above the current national average)	• **A Well Prepared, High Quality, and Supported Teacher in Every Classroom** • **A Well Prepared, High Quality, and Supported Principal in Every School** • **A System of Early Education that Provides Access to High-Quality Prekindergarten and Other Early Childhood Learning Opportunities** ○ **Component 6:** A system of early education that provides access to high-quality prekindergarten and other early childhood learning opportunities to ensure that all students at-risk of educational failure, regardless of where they live in the State, enter kindergarten on track for school success ■ **Action 1:** Expand the NC Pre-K program to make high-quality, full year services available to all eligible four-year-old children and enroll at least 75 percent of eligible four-year-old children in each county. ■ **Action 2:** Increase high-quality early learning opportunities for children from birth. ■ **Action3:** Expand and improve access to individualized early intervention services and support to families with eligible children birth to age three and include at risk children in North Carolina's definition of eligibility for the Part C Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (NC Infant Toddler Program). ■ **Action 4:** Incrementally scale up the Smart Start program to increase quality, access, and support for all children birth to age five and families, especially those in under resourced communities. ■ **Action 5:** Increase the volume and quality of the early childhood educator pipeline. ■ **Action 6:** Ensure quality transitions and alignment from early childhood programs to K-3 classrooms and strengthen elementary schools' readiness to support children to achieve early grade success.

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE OF EDUCATIONAL ARTICLES AND RESEARCH WITH TOPICS SIMILAR TO RESEARCH STUDY

Author(s)	Topic	Method	Type	Sampling	Sample	Sample item	Instrument
Palumbo and Styskal (1974)	Receptivity for Change	Quant	Descriptive	Purposive	44	participants	Interviews
Ma, Yin, Tang, Liu (2009)	Teacher Receptivity to Curriculum Reform	Quant	Descriptive	Simple randomized	763	participants	Survey
Smith and Torppa (2010)	Capacity for Change	Quant	Correlational	Random	325	participants	Survey
Di Fabio and Gori (2016)	Acceptance of Change	Quant	Correlational	---	261	participants	Survey
Christ and Makarani (2009)	Teacher Attitudes about Teaching	Mixed	Embedded case study	Purposive	31;6	participants	Survey and interviews
Wilson, Almerico, Johnston, & Ensmann (2020)	Leadership Dispositions	Mixed	---	---	33; 130; 5	participants	Two surveys & focus groups
Shields (2010)	Transformative Leadership	Qual	Case study	---	2	sites	Interviews & observations
Milner (2013)	Poverty, Learning, and Teaching through CRT lens	Qual	Document analysis	---	48; 49	articles; manuscripts	---
Friend & Caruthers (2015)	Transforming schools (including voice)	Qual	Narrative inquiry	Purposive	172	sites	Interviews & observations
Waheed, Hussin, & Daud (2017)	School Transformation	Qual	Multiple-case study	Purposive	28	participants	Interviews, observations, docs
Smith (2019)	Racialized experiences of	Qual	Phenomenology	Purposive	14	participants	Interviews

	school principals						
Fortner, Lalas, and Strikwerda (2021)	School leadership dispositions	Qual	Narrative inquiry	Convenience	15	participants	Interviews

APPENDIX D

PERMISSION STATUS OF SURVEY QUESTIONS USED FROM OTHER RESEARCH

Title	Citation	Original Usage	Original validity	Permission(s)
Organizational Readiness for Implementing Change (ORIC)	Hamilton, C. M., Strader, L. C., Pratt, J. G., Maiese, D., Hendershot, T., Kwok, R. K., ... & Haines, J. (2011). The PhenX Toolkit: get the most from your measures. *American journal of epidemiology*, *174*(3), 253–260. Shea, C. M., Jacobs, S. R., Esserman, D. A., Bruce, K., & Weiner, B. J. (2014). Organizational readiness for implementing change: a psychometric assessment of a new measure. *Implementation science*, *9*(1), 1–15. Weiner, B. J. (2009). A theory of organizational readiness for change. *Implementation science*, *4*(1), 1–9.	Hamilton et al. share "The Organizational Readiness for Implementing Change (ORIC) measure originated with Weiner's theory, which is based on the staff's ability to initiate change, put forth greater effort, be persistent, and cooperate with one another to implement the change" (2011). A more traditional readiness for change questionnaire requires the researcher assess various levels of the organization.	The instrument is theory based. The overall instrument has excellent reliability with a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of .96 The subscale Cronbach's alpha coefficients for change efficacy was 0.94, and for change commitment 0.90.	The Organizational Readiness for Implementing Change (ORIC) is a publicly available protocol and can be reused non-commercially with proper citation. Permission was not needed but was requested and granted.
School Heads' Leadership Practices (SLPQ)	Villar, R. B., Yazon, A. D., Tan, C. S., Buenvinida, L. P., & Bandoy, M. M. (2021). School Heads' Leadership Practices in The New Normal, Administrative Disposition, and Readiness of The	The survey is created by the authors. The authors share the study "assessed the relationship between the school heads' leadership practices, administrative	Excellent reliability with a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient of .954	As published by the International Journal of Theory and Application in Elementary and Secondary School Education, the work is licensed under a Creative

	Public Schools in Laguna. *International Journal of Theory and Application in Elementary and Secondary School Education*, *3*(2), 156–170.	disposition, and readiness of the public schools among school principals in the City Schools Divisions in Laguna for the school year 2020–2021" and results were obtained using the descriptive-correlational research design (Villar et al., 2021).		Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 International License with proper citation. Permission was not needed but was requested. No response was received.
Cultural Competence Self Assessment Questionnaire (CCSAQ)	Mason, J.L. (1995). Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Questionnaire: A Manual for Users. Portland, OR: Portland State University, Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children's Mental Health.	Created by the Portland Research and Training Center. The author writes the instrument "helps child- and family-serving agencies assess their cross-cultural strengths and weaknesses in order to design specific training activities or interventions . . ." (Mason, 1995).	Internal consistency reported with a majority of subscales yielding coefficients alpha of 0.80 or higher. Content validity also reported.	Permission requested. Response not received.
Cultural and Linguistic Competence Family Organization Assessment (CLCFOA)	Cohen E, Goode TD. *Policy Brief 1: Rationale for Cultural Competence in Primary Health Care*. Washington, DC: National Center for Cultural Competence; Winter 1999.	According to its manual, the CLCFOA is intended "to support family organizations to: 1. plan for and incorporate culturally and linguistically competent	None reported. It is suggested the instrument be used in a process to assess organizational readiness.	Permission is granted to use the guide for non-commercial purposes if it is not altered and proper credit is given to the authors and the National Center for Cultural

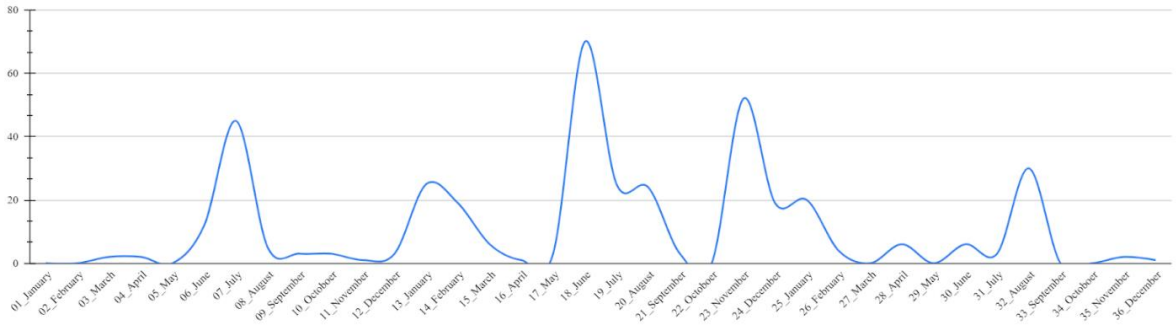
	Goode, T., Jones, W., Jackson, V., Bronheim, S., Dunne, C., & Lorenzo-Hubert, I. Cultural and Linguistic Competence Family Organization Assessment Instrument. Washington, DC: National Center for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development; 2010. Goode, T. D. (2010). A guide for using the cultural and linguistic competence family organizational assessment instrument. *Washington, DC: National Center for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development*.	policies, structures, and practices in all aspects of their work. 2. enhance the quality of services and supports they deliver within culturally diverse and underserved communities; and 3. promote cultural and linguistic competence as an essential approach in the elimination of disparities and the promotion of equity" (Goode, 2010).		Competence. Permission is required if the guide is to be: (1) modified in any way, (2) used in broad distribution, or (3) used for commercial purposes.
Workplace Readiness Questionnaire	Hannon, P. A., Helfrich, C. D., Chan, K. G., Allen, C. L., Hammerback, K., Kohn, M. J., ... & Harris, J. R. (2017). Development and pilot test of the workplace readiness questionnaire, a theory-based instrument to measure small workplaces' readiness to implement wellness programs. *American Journal of Health*	The questionnaire was developed to assess small workplaces' readiness to adopt and implement evidence-based wellness programs using Weiner's theory of readiness for change (Hannon et al., 2017).	Acceptable internal reliability within each subscale reported (coefficient alpha range, .75–.88). "Change efficacy" subscale did not predict change-related effort.	Permission requested by email and granted by both authors.

	Promotion, 31(1), 67–75.			
Educators Scale of Student Diversity (ESSD)	Patel, R. (2018). *Measuring cultural competency in educators: The educators scale of student diversity* (Doctoral dissertation, Seattle Pacific University).	Created as part of a study to "uncover a rich theoretical basis of cultural competency and awareness in education" and used to measure the cultural competency and awareness of educators (Patel, 2018).	Cronbach's alpha was .88 for the scale, suggesting reliability. Content reliability established. Convergent validity using correlation analysis was moderate positive.	Dissertation is free and open access by the Education School of Digital Common @ SPU. Permission for non-commercial use is not needed but was requested. Permission granted.
Organizational Readiness to Change Assessment (ORCA)	Helfrich, C. D., Li, Y. F., Sharp, N. D., & Sales, A. E. (2009). Organizational readiness to change assessment (ORCA): development of an instrument based on the Promoting Action on Research in Health Services (PARIHS) framework. *Implementation science, 4*(1), 1–13.	The instrument is theory based (Promoting Action on Research Implementation in Health Services, or PARIHS) and was developed as a measurement instrument to operationalize the constructs defined in the framework. ORCA is aligned to the core elements and subelements of the PARIHS framework.	The survey has not been validated beyond test-retest reliability. Kappa scores are favorable ranging from 0.39 to 0.80. Cronbach's alpha for scale reliability for the overall scales were 0.74, 0.85 and 0.95 for the evidence, context and facilitation scales. Internal validity was identified.	Published under license to BioMed Central Ltd. Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License permitting permits unrestricted use and distribution with proper citation. Permission for non-commercial use is not needed but was requested. No response received.
Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist	Cultural Competency - CVIMS - Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society	The instrument was designed to be a self-assessment tool to explore	None reported.	Permission not needed but requested. Response not received.

		individual cultural competence.		
MGH DoM Anti-RaCism (ARC) Assessment	Burnett-Bowie, S. A. M., Zeidman, J. A., Soltoff, A. E., Carden, K. T., James, A. K., & Armstrong, K. A. (2022). Attitudes and Actions Related to Racism: The Anti-RaCism (ARC) Survey Study. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 1–8.	The instrument was created as part of a research on health to assess whether attitudes about the impact of racism on health or society are associated with intervening around racism.	Partially validated. Items assessing the impact of racism included questions from previously validated scales and also new items not previously validated.	Permission requested. Permission granted.
Privilege and Oppression Inventory	Hays, D. G., Chang, C. Y., & Decker, S. L. (2007). Initial development and psychometric data for the privilege and oppression inventory. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*, *40*(2), 66–79.	Given the need to train and periodically assess counselors' degree of Multicultural Counseling Competency (MCC).	Cronbach's alpha coefficient for internal consistency reliability of the 39-item POI (total score) was high (.95). Exception of 1 item. Validation procedures completed.	Permission requested. Permission granted.

APPENDIX E

FIGURES RELATED TO DOCUMENT ANALYSIS



An example public response shared during a January 6, 2022, state board meeting reads “STOP!! CRT should not be taught to our children, in that, you are instructing our children racist wrongful thinking in doing so. There was not a race problem until the Democrats started pushing and brainwashing Americans in to thinking there was. The dumbing down of our education system has been in play for crap such as this”.

IRB Information

Nov 8, 2022 9:12:19 AM PST

Raketa Ouedraogo-Thomas
Sch of Leadership & Ed Science

Re: Expedited - Initial - IRB-2022-523, Examining Systemic and Dispositional Factors Impacting Historically Disenfranchised Schools Across North Carolina

Dear Raketa Ouedraogo-Thomas:

The Institutional Review Board has rendered the decision below for IRB-2022-523, Examining Systemic and Dispositional Factors Impacting Historically Disenfranchised Schools Across North Carolina.

Decision: Approved

Selected Category: 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Findings: Thank you for addressing all of the review feedback from prior submissions.

Research Notes:

Internal Notes:

The USD IRB requires annual renewal of all active studies reviewed and approved by the IRB. Please submit an application for renewal prior to the annual anniversary date of initial study approval.
If an application for renewal is not received, the study will be administratively closed.

Note: We send IRB correspondence regarding student research to the faculty advisor, who bears the ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the research. We request that the faculty advisor share this correspondence with the student researcher.

The next deadline for submitting project proposals to the Provost's Office for full review is N/A. You may submit a project proposal for expedited or exempt review at any time.

Sincerely,

[redacted]

Truc Ngo, PhD
IRB Administrator

Office of the Senior Vice President and Provost
Hughes Administration Center
5998 Alcalá Park, San Diego, CA 92110-2492
Phone (619) 260-4553 • Fax (619) 260-2210 • www.sandiego.edu