A Call for Social Justice Work:
How Three Women of Color Experienced Their Administrator Preparation Program to the Assistant Principalship

This manuscript has been peer-reviewed, accepted, and endorsed by the International Council of Professors of Educational Leadership (ICPEL) as a significant contribution to the scholarship and practice of school administration and K-12 education.

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In this day and age, when educational administrators are required to make effective progress and academic achievement for all students, educational administrator preparational programs must equip all prospective leaders with the skill sets, knowledge, and experience to lead diverse student populations to high levels of learning and academic success. In this exploratory qualitative study, the researchers examined the lived experiences of three women of color in their educational administrator preparational program to their first administrative role as assistant principals. Selected participants participated in semi-structured interviews. A synthesis of key research on social justice education, social justice leadership, ethical leadership, and social justice work defined the researchers' definitions of social justice and social justice work. Using Starratt's (1991, 1996) multidimensional model on ethical leadership to address social justice work, the researchers found that even though there was not a pervasive theme of social justice in the program, the women felt "prepared" for their next job. Yet, participants still suggested that the program "go deeper" in addressing how to do social justice work in order to address the demands placed on all educational administrators today. Findings from this paper reveal an immediate call to action for educational administrative leadership programs to prioritize and to prepare all aspiring leaders for social justice work with a discussion on what next steps for initiating and implementing social justice work could possibly entail.

Keywords: social justice work, Starratt's framework on ethical leadership, ethic of critique, ethic of justice, ethic of care, critical consciousness, organizational change

Preparing school leaders to be a positive force for making change toward a more just educational system is a challenge for leadership preparation programs. The educational landscape is changing in terms of the purpose of education, what students need to know and be able to do upon graduating, and how our society provides equitable access to education, resources, and technology for all. With profound changes in artificial intelligence, automation, and globalization shifting workforce demands, education systems and educators are needing to adapt or be left behind. Meanwhile, lessons from COVID-19 revealed the importance of being flexible in our teaching: Learning could occur anytime, anyplace even outside the confines of the classroom walls (Chen & Almarode, 2022; Pagoto et al., 2021). The pandemic emphasized the need for all students to have equal access to broadband and the importance of addressing students' mental and social needs, as well as the importance of building pathways between school, home, and community to ensure that learning is sustainable, meaningful, and relevant to all students (Chen & Almarode, 2022).

In this day and age, when schools are held accountable for making effective progress, academic growth, and achievement for all students, future educational leaders must be ready to lead diverse student populations to high levels of learning and academic success while at the same time being responsive to the social, emotional, mental, and academic needs of all students. Therefore, aspiring principals must be prepared to deliver academic programs that are effective in closing the achievement gaps for all student groups, including students from low-income families, and even to address the effects of the digital divide. Educational leadership programs must show aspiring leaders how to address issues of diversity, equity, and social justice as well as how to sustain this type of change. The work of social justice involves more than just delivering professional development on multiculturalism or inclusion in schools: It involves a more complex thought process and a multilayered approach.

Statement of the Problem: Complexities of Social Justice Work

A synthesis of related literature reveals that social justice work for educational administrators is both complex and complicated (Capper & Young, 2014; DeMatthews, 2014, 2015; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Furman, 2012; Guillaume et al., 2020; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; McKenzie et al., 2008; Ryan, 2006; Turhan, 2010). Aspiring leaders must be cognizant of the inequities first and be able to raise that same level of consciousness to all school members (Guillaume et al., 2020). The initiation and engagement of this type of moral dialogue is imperative to the work of social justice and of being an ethical leader (Sergiovanni, 1992; Starratt, 2004). In asking all members to examine their own biases and biases in the system that may impact the academic achievement and growth of all students, it is inevitable that emerging leaders will face resistance and must know how to navigate from the potential pitfalls and obstacles (Theoharis, 2007). A multistep process is thus required of educational leaders involved with social justice work (Furman, 2012; Guilluame et al., 2020; Jean-Marie et al., 2009). How one leader chooses to facilitate this moral dialogue and implement change may look differently than another leader's path even though both leaders are working toward the same outcome of eliminating the injustices and inequities of the system (Turhan, 2010). For example, an internal leader who has moved up the ranks to become the new principal may take on a different approach for confronting issues of inequity as opposed to another leader who has come from the "outside" and is unfamiliar with the ways of her new community. Because of the complex nature of social justice work, it is important to prepare all emerging leaders with the mind frame, skill sets, and experiences to do this type of work successfully and to ensure its sustainability.

Significance of the Study

Three aspects of this paper make it distinct from the body of research on social justice in educational leadership programs. First, we examined the lived experiences of three women of color who successfully completed their school leadership preparation program and secured their first administrative position after the completion of their program as the unit of analysis. Previous studies on social justice leadership have focused on principals, administrators, or leaders who have already been established in their schools as the unit of analysis (Chiu & Walker, 2007; DeMatthews, 2014, 2015; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Furman, 2012; Theoharis, 2007). In most cases, it is rare for a teacher and/or a teacher leader who is exiting out of an educational leadership preparational program to secure a principalship without having prior, successful experience as an associate principal, dean, and/or assistant principal. By shedding light on the lived experiences of three women of color in their leadership program and their first administrative role as assistant principals, we hope to "make visible aspects of social relations and of the natural world that are unavailable from dominant perspectives, and in doing so…generate the kinds of questions that will lead to [a] more complete and true account" (Bowell, 2022, para. 2). We recognize that these women offer certain realities that dominant groups may not have experienced because of their race and gender. By giving voice to their perspectives, our goal was not to construct feminist standpoint theory (Bowell, 2022); rather, we hope to gain a more holistic approach for addressing how to do social justice work successfully and how to prepare aspiring leaders for their first administrative role.

Second, the proposition of a multilayered approach in educational administrator preparation programs provided the frame for this study. Similar to the works of Furman (2012) and Theoharis (2007), we argue that "doing social justice work" is more than just having a critical lens to the injustices in a system. It is also understanding where to begin, how best to navigate the obstacles, and how to work with others to bring about this type of awareness and substantive change. For example, how might a new administrator go about confronting issues of inequity and injustice, particularly if these practices are the result of long-standing traditions and beliefs in her school community? What does this work entail, particularly for an administrator in her first administrative role? Where would she begin? How might she do this work in such a way not to alienate others but to bring them along in order to promote greater equity and excellence for all students?

At its core, justice, diversity, and equity is about the care, respect, and compassion of human beings (Sergiovanni, 1992; Starratt, 2005). Undergirding the work of social justice is the notion that aspiring educational administrators must learn how to "establish an ethical school environment, in which education can take place ethically" (Starratt, 1991, p. 187). Emerging school leaders will make individual choices regarding individual circumstances that occur in a larger ethical context. Educational administrator programs are therefore responsible for preparing future leaders how to effectively lead and manage an educational organization that serves a higher moral purpose; that is, "the nurturing of the human, social, and intellectual growth of the youngsters" (Starratt, 1991, p. 187). Research (e.g., Guillaume et al., 2020; see also McKenzie et al., 2008; Theoharis, 2007) contends that a deeper understanding of what is all involved, specifically the ways in which leaders enact justice, the resistance they face in the work, and how leaders continue to sustain the work of equity and justice are what aspiring leaders need to know to be better prepared to implement, lead, and sustain this type of change. As a first step, it is important to understand how aspiring leaders hear and operationalize what social justice means and looks like while in their educational leadership preparation programs. Next, it is important to determine if what they have learned in their program has helped them to be successful in their first administrative role.

Third, while there is substantial research in the areas of social justice education (Bell, 1997; Cho, 2017; Cochran-Smith, 1999, 2004; Dover, 2009; Gau, 2005; and Hackman, 2005) social justice work and

social justice leadership (Canli, 2019; Capper & Young, 2014; Chiu & Walker, 2007; DeMatthews, 2014, 2015; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Furman, 2012; Guillaume et al., 2020; Kemp-Graham, 2015; Marshall, 2004; McKenzie et al., 2008; Theoharis, 2007; Turban, 2010) and even on ethical leadership (Enrich et al., 2015, Feng-I, 2011; Ingram & Flumerfelt, 2009; Langlois et al., 2012; Sergiovanni, 1992; Shapiro & Gross, 2013; Starratt, 1991, 1996, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005, Stefkovich & Begley, 2007), there appears to be an absence of studies that specifically delineates the differences between what ethical leadership and what social justice leadership mean in terms of "doing social justice work" in educational leadership preparational programs. While the purpose of this paper is not to purport if one type leadership (i.e., ethical or social justice leadership) or one type of model (see Brown, 2004; Capper et al., 2006; Furman, 2012; McKenzie et al., 2008) is better suited for preparing aspiring administrators to do the work of social justice than the other, by using Starratt's (1991, 1996) multidimensional framework as a mechanism for addressing social justice work, this paper supports the research (Capper & Young, 2014; Furman, 2012; Jean-Marie at al., 2009) that administrator preparation programs need to take a more holistic approach of looking at what all is involved in "doing social justice work." Arguably, Jean-Marie et al. (2009) contends that social justice is just emerging in educational leadership programs. With changing demographics in schools and more demands placed on educational leaders today, "leadership preparation programs should promote opportunities for critical reflection, leadership praxis, critical discourse, and develop critical pedagogy related to issues of ethics, inclusion, democratic schooling, and social justice" (p. 20). Only then will future leaders know how to implement, navigate, and sustain this type of change (Furman, 2012; Jean-Marie et. al., 2009; McKenzie et al., 2008). In the next section, we turn to a body of research that is pertinent to our study.

Conceptual Framework

Defining Social Justice

Defining social justice is not easy: It does not have a specific structure or only one solution (Turhan, 2010; Furman, 2012). According to Turhan (2010), social justice is based on two guiding principles with the first, emphasizing "the individual's right to choose their good and right, and the second…reveal[ing] that everyone has equal opportunities pursuing this good and right" (p. 1358; see also Strike, 1999). In an effort to attain both of these foundational beliefs, social justice and the democratic community become an ideal and a moral purpose to achieve. Therefore, to reach this ultimate goal of social justice, the work is on-going, and it may look differently depending on situation and context (McKenzie et al., 2008; Turban, 2010). Because the ideal of social justice is never fully actualized, in doing this ethical work, social justice also becomes a process. As Bell (1997) suggests, "the process for attaining the goal of social justice…should be democratic and participatory, inclusive and affirming of human agency and human capacities for working collaboratively to create change" (p. 3).

Because social justice work is multifaceted and has different approaches (Turhan, 2010), terms such as equity, equal opportunity, multicultural education, and diversity are often associated with social justice work (Cho, 2017; Furman 2012; Guillaume et al., 2019). In spite of its plural meanings, a common understanding exists among leadership scholars of social justice: They identify social justice with "focus[ing] on the experiences of marginalized groups and inequities in educational opportunities and outcomes" (Furman, 2012, p. 194). According to Evans (2007), researchers of social justice "support the notion that educational leaders have a social and a moral obligation to foster equitable school practices, processes and outcomes for learners of different racial, economic, cultural, disability, and sexual orientation backgrounds" (p. 250).

In this paper, we adopt Bell's (1997), Furman's (2012), and Evans' (2007) conceptual understanding of social justice. First, social justice is both an ideal and a goal to achieve. Second, the work of social justice calls for a democratic and inclusive process that involves people working together to bring out this substantive change (Bell, 1997). Third, the work of social justice examines the inequities and marginalization in schools and student outcomes (Furman, 2012). Finally, we believe that educational leaders play a crucial role and have a moral and ethical responsibility in making meaningful and positive changes in both education and the lives of traditionally marginalized and oppressed students (Evans, 2007).

Defining Social Justice Leadership

Recognizing that social justice is a process "built on respect, care, recognition, and empathy" (Theoharis, 2007, p. 223; Bell, 1997), we support the notion that social justice is not separate from the work of educational leaders (Bogotch, 2002; Evans, 2007; Starratt, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005; Theoharis, 2007). Because educational leaders are involved with social justice, social justice leadership calls for a deep and critical examination of those systems of power and privilege that give rise to social inequalities. Social justice leaders therefore recognize their role within an oppressive system (Guillaume et al., 2020) and make issues of "race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions …central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision (Theoharis, 2007, p. 223). In raising the levels of critical consciousness of all school members (Guillaume et al., 2020; McKenzie et al., 2008), social justice leaders work to bring about change on school policies and practices that are oppressive and unfair, replacing them with ones that are more suitable and fairer culturally (DeMatthews, 2014, 2015). Social justice leaders work toward eliminating inequities, discrimination, and injustices in order to bring about impactful change and a greater good for all (Turhan, 2010). Finally, social justice leaders recognize the importance of embracing "inclusivity" and work with others to institutionalize and sustain social justice in their schools (DeMatthews, 2014, 2015; DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014; Ryan 2006).

Theoretical Framework

Starratt's Framework on Ethical Leadership

In doing social justice work, it is inevitable that aspiring administrators will encounter moral dilemmas that will require them to make ethical decisions. Sergiovanni (1992) argues that anytime there is a power imbalance somewhere, ethics are involved. At its core, the researchers assert that social justice is about redressing the injustices and inequities, and eliminating marginalization in schools. It is about restoring the balance of power to all students and "creating an ethical environment for the conduct of education" (Starratt, 1991, p. 187). Building upon the challenge that social justice work cannot be separated from the practices of educational leadership (Bogotch, 2002; Theoharis, 2007), Starratt's (1991, 1996, 2004) theoretical framework on ethical leadership provides future administrators with the critical lens to be present of such inequities and to learn how to engage in the moral dialogue, examination, and self-reflection on what it means to be a leader "doing social justice work."

Foundational to the work on social justice, ethical leadership, and developing an ethical school is Starratt's extensive research (1991, 1996, 1998, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2011, 2012; Sergiovanni et al., 2014) on what this moral stance means and looks like for schools, teachers, leaders, and future administrators and educational leadership programs. According to Starratt's framework (1991, 1996), the three themes (i.e., the ethic of critique, the ethic of justice, and the ethic of care) are not discrete. They

are interrelated with one another with each theme complementing and enriching each other to offer a more comprehensive and multidimensional foundation.

> The ethic of critique assumes a point of view about social justice and human rights and about the way communities ought to govern themselves. The ethic of justice assumes an ability to perceive injustice in the social order as well as some minimal level of caring about relationships in the social order. The ethic of caring does not ignore the demands of the community governance issues, but claims that caring is the ideal fulfillment of all social relationships, even though most relationships among members of a community function according to a more remote form of caring. (Starratt, 1991, p. 198)

Ethic of Critique

For example, the ethic of critique focuses on the inconsistencies and inequalities in both schools and society. This theme asks leaders to consider "*who controls*, *who legitimates*, and *who defines"* (Starratt, 1991, p. 199) in order to create a more just and equitable environment for all members. This ethic calls for administrators to fight and to alter institutionalized inequities, discrimination, and injustices that benefit a few students and harm many more. While the ethic of critique demands action on the inequities of an institution, it often falls short of offering a complete approach (Starratt, 1991, 1996).

Ethic of Justice

The ethic of justice provides a roadmap on how to reconstruct the social order that the ethic of critique has criticized. The ethic of justice responds to the question of how shall stakeholders govern themselves. This particular theme is concerned with equity, equality, and fairness of an action. It demands school leaders to act accordingly to their duties by respecting all stakeholder's equal rights and adopting appropriate processes, policies, and professional codes that aide its members to act fairly and to govern themselves justly.

Ethic of Care

As social justice work is about people and the treatment of people, the ethic of care asks leaders to think responsibly of how their decisions impact their relationships with individual stakeholders. This theme "postulates a level of caring that honors the dignity of each person and desires to see the person enjoy a fully human life" (Starratt, 1991, p. 195). It ensures that the processes and decisions are aligned with the needs of individual stakeholders, and not for personal motives. It places the relationships of community members at the core of decisions and asks leaders to demonstrate their concerns for others when making such decisions.

This multidimensional frame offers a more holistic approach for understanding the dynamic nature of social justice work and raises for aspiring leaders the necessary questions to contemplate when doing this type of complicated work. The intermingling of each theme provides emerging leaders with a rich human response to the uncertain ethical situations that they will encounter while enacting social justice in their schools. We use Starratt's (1991, 1996) multidimensional model on ethical leadership as the theoretical basis for understanding how participants operationalized social justice work while in their program and in their first administrative role.

Methodology

A qualitative approach provided us with the most powerful means to gather the perceptions of three women of color and how they operationalized social justice work while in their program and to identify their level of preparedness for their first administrative role. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), qualitative research is prevalent in education research as its "purpose is to *understand* how people make sense of their lives and their experiences" (p. 24). Two research questions served as guideposts for our paper:

1. In what ways was the theme of social justice embedded throughout the program?
2. In what ways did this leadership program prepare students for their first administrative role?

Purposeful Sampling and Participants

We purposely chose our educational preparation leadership program to evaluate because of our personal commitment to its success and to our students. Purposeful sampling was used to ensure that the voices of an unrepresented group were captured by program builders. To select participants, five criteria were employed. All participants (a) identified themselves as racial and gender minorities, (b) were taught by the same instructor, (c) had successfully completed their program, (d) had passed their School Leaders Licensure Assessment (SLLA) before or upon completion of the program, and (e) had obtained their first administrative role prior to or within a year after exiting the program in August, 2019. The population of interest was the twenty students enrolled in the first author's (LC's) cohort. Out of the twenty students, five met all criteria. However, only three participated in the study. Table 1 provides a graphic representation of the participants' gender, race, years of teaching, and position of their first administrative role.

Table 1
Background Information of Participants

Name	Gender	Race	Years of Teaching	First Administrative Role
Agatha	Female	Black	12	Elementary School Assistant Principal
Betty	Female	Black	8	Middle School Assistant Principal
Cathy	Female	Black	9	High School Assistant Principal

Note. Agatha, Betty, and Cathy are pseudonyms. Cathy changed jobs after her first year as an administrator. She received a promotion and became a director of operations in a middle school in another division.

Description of the Program

In this educational leadership certificated program, twenty-one graduate credits are delivered to graduate students in three consecutive semesters (i.e., Fall, Spring, and Summer). Abiding by the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), this one-year program is fully accredited. Table 2 outlines the courses in this program.

Table 2

Courses for X Leadership Certificated Program

Semester	Course Number	Course Title	Credits
Fall 2018	PEDU 504	Educational Leadership	3
	PEDU 620	School Law	3
	PEDU 690	Internship in Educational Leadership	1
Spring 2019	PEDU 625	School Finance	3
	PEDU 671	Supervision and Evaluation	3
	PEDU 690	Internship in Educational Leadership	1
Summer 2019	PEDU 628	School Personnel Administration	3
	PEDU 629	School Operations and Management	3
	PEDU 690	Internship in Educational Leadership	1
		School Leaders Licensure Assessment	0

As this is a postgraduate-level endorsement program, students must have a master's prior to entering. At the end of the year, students apply for their administrative licensure after successfully completing their coursework, internship requirements, and passing the SLLA.

In 2018-2019, there were nine cohorts between twelve to twenty students each. To this day, this endorsement program abides by this model: Students and their instructors are grouped by area sites; each cohort is taught by three professors. Each professor is assigned to teach three courses throughout the year. Students receive instruction through a hybrid learning model: They work both asynchronously through the online platform Canvas and are required to attend fourteen face-to-face sessions that are held on Saturdays. In these sessions, students attend a three-hour morning class and a three-hour afternoon class. The instructor who is in charge of the internship class meets with students individually in the morning or in the afternoon. In this study the cohort consisted of two instructors, who were white males, and one instructor was an Asian female. Each instructor had more than twenty years of teaching and administrator experience.

Data Collection – Interviews

Data collection consisted of semi-structured interviews on December, 2020 and November, 2021. The first set of interviews occurred in December, 2020 after a couple of months when participants had exited out of the program and were immersed in their first administrative role while the second set of interviews occurred in November, 2021 after participants had one full year of being an administrator. The first author (LC) interviewed all three participants using Zoom, an online platform, in December, 2020 and November, 2021. Interviews lasted from thirty to forty minutes. Table 3 highlights the first set of interview questions aligned to research question one (RQ1) and to research question two (RQ2).

Table 3

First Set of Interview Questions

RQ1: In what ways was the theme of social justice embedded in the program?

Q4: How do you define social justice?

Q5: Do you think that the theme of social justice was infused in the program? If so, how was it infused? If not, where could it have been infused in the program?

Q6: Did you feel the program addressed the questions of equity, diversity, and respect for all human differences?
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RQ2: In what ways did this leadership program prepare students for their first administrative role?

Q8: As you do this work, do you feel like your preparation was adequate?

Q9: In what ways did you feel the program prepared you for your first administrative role?

Q10: Did you find the program to be rigorous enough to challenge you? If so, how? If not, why?

Q11: Do you think you are prepared for the next phase of your career? Why? Why not?

Q12: What other insights and/or recommendations do you have for program builders?

Q13: For this particular program, especially from the lens of helping other female leaders of color matriculate successfully, is there anything else we should have focused more on and/or spent more time on?
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Note. Questions one (Q1), two, three, and seven provided background information and a context for this program. Responses to these questions are found in Findings. Q1: Why did you want to become a school administrator? What is the story behind that? Q2: Do you think that a professional learning community was established and fostered in the program? Q3: How would you describe the culture of the cohort? Q7: How important was it for you to have professors with various backgrounds teach the courses?

Table 4 highlights the second set of interview questions aligned to RQ1 and RQ2.

Table 4

Second Set of Interview Questions
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RQ1: In what ways was the theme of social justice embedded in the program?

Q3: How do you define social justice?

Q4: Do you think that the theme of social justice was infused in the program? If so, how was it infused? If not, where could it have been infused in the program?

Q5: Were there particular courses or activities in the coursework that helped with your

understanding of social justice work? If so, what were those activities or particular courses?

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RQ2: In what ways did this leadership program prepare students for their first administrative role?

Q2: In what ways did this leadership program prepare you for your first administrative job?

Q6: In what ways did the program prepare you for your work in social justice as a new leader?

Q7: Have you faced resistance in attempting to do social justice work as a new leader? If so, what did this look like?

Q8: What other insights and/or recommendations do you have for program builders?

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Note. To verify findings, Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, and Q8 from Table 4 are the same questions found in Table 3 but in different order. Q5 is a new question and a follow-up question to RQ1. Q6 and Q7 are new questions and follow-up questions to RQ2.

Role of Researchers

The role of the first author (LC) was that of a participant observer as she was immersed in the setting and absorbed in the work and experiences of her students (Patton, 2015). The other authors (DG and ST-A) were instructors in the leadership programs but had different students. Because the first author was Agatha's, Betty's, and Cathy's instructor, she was mindful of her positional authority. To avoid any conflict of interests, interviews occurred only after IRB approval and when participants had exited out of the program. Before the interviews occurred, the first author provided Agatha, Betty, and Cathy with a full explanation of the study and informed them that participation was voluntary. To ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of participants, pseudonyms are used in this paper.

Data Analysis Procedures

Prior to analyzing interview data, we checked all transcripts for accuracy, established common procedural steps for analyzing interview data, and used a common template for organizing codes and emerging categories (see Creswell & Poth, 2018). These initial conversations occurred on email. We then analyzed the interview data independently, and identified codes and categories using steps as outlined by Harry et al. (2005) and Anfara et al. (2002) and constant comparative analysis, which "occurs as the data are compared and categories and their properties emerge or are integrated together" (Anfara et al, 2002, p. 32).

After data were coded (first iteration), we convened on Zoom to discuss how we had derived our codes. In discussing what words, patterns, or behaviors stood out, we clarified the properties for each code; some codes were condensed into new ones. With each point of difference, we debated and clarified until we agreed on the characteristics of the code. After developing intercoder agreement, we reviewed our data independently for further coding (J. W. Creswell & J. D. Creswell, 2018).

In keeping with constant comparative analysis, some categories were broken down further into subcategories (Harry et al., 2005). As coding derived from the first to the second reiteration, several themes were generated, moving coding to interpretation. In formulating our findings independently, we

looked for patterns and regularities, as well as paradoxes and irregularities based on deductive reasoning. Although we used both an inductive and deductive process in analyzing the interview data, our goal was not to develop grounded theory rather to generate themes (Anfara et al., 2002). We used Starratt's (1991, 1996) theoretical lens on ethical leadership to compare our findings. If a theme was rare or if there was evidence contrary to the pattern of a code or theme, we noted it in our results. We then returned a second time to discuss and to compare our results with one another.

Rigor of the Study

To increase the rigor of our study, we designated a series of steps. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative researchers should use at least two strategies in any given study to enhance validity, and designate a procedure for intercoder agreement to build reliability of findings. In this article, we employed six out of nine recognized steps to enhance the overall validity of our study from the researcher's, participant's, and reader's lens (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Further, we established a procedure to cross-check codes. Steps are listed below.

Researcher's Lens. To increase our study's validity from the researcher's lens, we clarified our biases and presented disconfirming evidence (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Prior to interviewing the participants, the first author practiced reflexivity to be mindful "of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and economic origins of [her] own perspective and voice as well as the perspective and voices of those [she] interviewed (Patton, 2015, p. 20). Prior to data analysis, we reflected on our own biases and experiences that we brought to this study. Any evidence that ran counter to the themes was noted in results.

Participant's Lens. To increase our study's validity from the participant's perspective, we employed member checking, and the first author spent a prolonged time in the field (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Agatha, Betty, and Cathy were invited to review, critique, and comment on the analysis and interpretation of the data to ensure for accuracy of findings. As the participants' course instructor, the first author spent at least two years with participants, and trust was built over time. According to J. W. Creswell and J. D. Creswell (2018), "the more experience that a researcher has with participants in their setting, the more accurate or valid will be the findings" (p. 201).

Reader's Lens. Finally, to enhance our study's validity from the reader's perspective, we used thick description to convey findings and an external auditor with demonstrated expertise in both qualitative research and research methodology to analyze and to provide feedback on the entire study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

To improve our study's reliability, the first author created a detailed record of procedural steps (see Yin, 2018) and developed intercoder agreement. Codes and results were cross-checked and reviewed at least twice. All of the aforementioned steps helped to build validity and reliability in our study.

Findings

Descriptive statements containing codes and categories in italics, quotations from participants highlighting key themes, and tables were used to present our results.

Part One: A Brief Synopsis of the Participants and the Program

Strong Instructional Background and Disposition for Leadership

To begin with, Agatha, Betty, and Cathy came from rich backgrounds. They identified themselves as minorities because of their gender and race. They taught the same subject, in the same school, but in different grade levels. Agatha, Betty, and Cathy are in their early thirties with at least eight or more years of teaching experience. Each woman had received multiple teaching awards and was recognized by her administrators and peers as an *excellent teacher* with a focus on *high achievement and growth for all students*. Each participant held *leadership positions*, such as a grade-level chair, a department chair, or a leader in the community. All women had someone who mentored and encouraged them to become administrators. When asked why they had wanted to be a school administrator, each woman saw *leadership as a way to make positive changes for the "lives of all students."*

A Culture of Care, Respect, and Diversity

In describing the culture of the program, Agatha, Betty, and Cathy shared that a professional learning community had been established based on the core values of *"respect," "care," "diversity," and valuing of different perspectives*. Cathy explained, "I would say that, within our cohort, everybody seemed to get along and respect everybody's views and opinions on things. It was a pretty diverse group when we think about background…It was a diverse culture."

A Culture of Authenticity and Learning

All women felt *comfortable* engaging in *"genuine"* and *"authentic"* conversations with their peers and instructors because a culture of *"acceptance"* and of feeling *"valued and heard"* had been established. They believed that all members in their cohort had "*learned"* by *listening to each other's perspectives* and that conversations were *relevant, meaningful, and* "*usable."* Betty stated:

> I felt like it was professional, but I also feel like it was real. It was genuine and authentic, and I think that together, it made a great experience. I think, every time we walked out of class, 'We're like, okay, we can use this.' It wasn't just some random, arbitrary
> information passed off. It was usable, and it was said and done in such a way that allowed us to grow. And so, overall, the culture was just one of acceptance…But you know, even though we didn't always agree, it was open enough that you knew each person could grow and gain something from it.

Learning From Professors with Diverse Leadership Styles, Backgrounds, and Experiences

All three women felt that it was essential to have professors with varying *leadership styles*, *backgrounds*, and *experiences* teach their courses so that they could *learn from them and their lived administrative experiences.* They found these conversations to be *"useful"* and *relevant* in their present-day work as assistant principals. Cathy noted:

> Our professors did a good job with kind of standing on their soapboxes and telling us the real deal, which helped because they were transparent. I think it was extremely important to have people who have first walked in your shoes did what you've done. And that came from different places because sometimes having that lens of I'm not from here, but I see that this is a problem, definitely helps.

Having a Female Minority Instructor Helped to Create a Greater Sense of Belonging and Validation for Being in this Role

Two other themes also generated from Agatha's, Betty's, and Cathy's responses. First,

having an instructor who was both female and a person of color helped them feel a *greater sense of belonging*. Second, it *validated their feelings for pursuing a leadership position* as they saw leadership dominated by *"White men."* Agatha stated:

> I think it was very important to have professors from different backgrounds. If I had walked into that room, and there had just been three White men, I don't think I would have felt at ease. You know, from where I come from, it's already in that place of privilege of being older White men. I think my mind probably would have been blocked.
>
> So, having an Asian female instructor was very good because I probably only had one other Asian teacher that I know of PERIOD. In the 12 years that I have been [at my school], I have seen only one Asian teacher, and she was of Indian descent. I think that's something we need to see more of, to know that other people out there exist besides you know, the White man. When I think of my principals and administrators, I think of White male leadership. And then in the teaching environment, it's dominated by White women, so where's the balance?

Feeling a Sense of Fellowship Through Conversations About Race and Gender

Equally important for these women was to *hear and engage in conversations with what leadership felt and looked like from the lens of a female administrator of color* and to *listen and discuss issues that she dealt with pertaining to her race and gender while in her leadership role*. These conversations allowed participants to feel *more connected* and a *greater sense of fellowship and belonging*. As Betty reflected:

> Those conversations were important to me. You know, you always talked about your experiences growing up and some of the treatment you faced coming into school systems, and I respected that because that's more aligned with my experiences. Even though I might have been born here, I feel like sometimes I'm navigating through a land that's not my own. So it was very important for all of us to see multiple sides of something because then it makes what you are going through okay. It's like, 'Okay. Well, I'm not the only one that's experiencing this.' It's okay to have struggles talking with higher-ups who don't necessarily see things my way or don't have my shared experience or didn't grow up with the background that I had. You know, having more people whom you can talk to that and who've experienced that was super important to us.

Table 5 summarizes key lessons from our findings.

Table 5
Lessons from Findings in Part One

Lesson One	Prior to any instruction, it is important to set the tone and to establish *a culture of care, respect, and diversity* so that all students can feel *comfortable* and *safe* in expressing their feelings; challenging each other's thoughts and beliefs; and engaging in critical conversations about issues of race, marginalization, and inequities that exist in schools and society.
Lesson Two	Having a *diversity* of students and instructors is important. It is essential to have both instructors and students who are *diverse in gender, racial backgrounds, and experiences so that students can learn and gain experiences from others.*
Lesson Three	Race and gender matter. They help define who you are and your identity. For these three women, it was invaluable for them to have a *female instructor of color* who

was *transparent* and who *discussed issues pertaining to her race and gender in her leadership role.* These discussions helped to *address their own concerns and questions* about their place and role in leadership, particularly as they saw leadership dominated by *"White men."* These conversations cultivated a *greater sense of belonging* and *of fellowship* in doing leadership work.

Note. Major categories and codes are italicized.

Part Two: Findings From RQ1

Next, we explore how social justice was embedded in the program.

Social Justice as Equity and Excellence For All

To begin with, Agatha, Betty, and Cathy defined social justice as *"equal treatment" for all*, *"equality,"* *"fairness for everyone,"* *"truest form of equity,"* *"equity for all,"* and *"excellence for all."* They described social justice work as both *a goal and a process with action steps.* Betty stated:

> Social justice is about equal treatment, regardless of someone's ethnicity and then also the laws, practices, and belief systems that are in place to make sure that that equality takes place. And when it doesn't, what are the measures that will happen to make sure that basic laws and rights are provided to all, to anyone, regardless of what they look like?

Inequities in Society and Schools Exist

Agatha, Betty, and Cathy were *critically aware* that *"equity and excellence for all" does not exist for all people.* As Cathy explained, "If we're looking at social justice in the educational realm, that kind of rolls back to the fight to make sure that everybody's voice is heard regardless of their nationality or race."

Being Critical Conscious of Race and Racism

Therefore, to ensure that all people are afforded with the *"truest form of equity and excellence,"* they saw the importance of *"creating a sense of urgency"* in which educational leaders are *critically conscious of issues of race and racism in society and in their schools, work collaboratively with all school members to eliminate racial inequities, and create opportunity gaps for people and students of color*. As Agatha shared:

> Social justice is based around equity. And just being able to have that balance of you know, not just wealth, but rights are equitable, and opportunities are equitable for all. Ifeel like the biggest thing that we have right now is this opportunity gap for a lot of People of color...I feel like a lot of inequities can be eliminated or lessened by working together to close the opportunity gaps for people and students of color.

> In her second interview, Agatha added:
> Ifeel like in a lot of the world and school systems today, we will say we want things to be equitable, but I know and maybe because I am a Black person, I do believe all lives can't matter until BLACK LIVES ALSO MATTER.

Social Justice and Social Justice Work Not Clearly Embedded in the Program

According to Agatha, Betty, and Cathy, social justice was not "*explicitly stated" in the* program; rather, if social justice had been discussed, it stemmed from *conversations brought forth by their professors and through project-based learning (PBL)*. When asked if the program had touched upon questions or issues on equity, diversity, and respect for all human differences, they responded that it was the *instructors who brought forth these topics through conversations and class activities*. While they felt that the conversations on equity, diversity, and social justice were *relevant* and "*useful*," they believed that these discussions had "*only scratched the surface.*" As Betty articulated:

> I would have liked to have even more conversations about social justice and social justice work because, you know, especially as a woman of color, a Black woman going into an area that doesn't quite look like me, being able to know how to leverage, how to have courageous conversations, how to make sure that my voice is being heard, how to make sure that all students are really being considered at all times, and not just what someone else wants for them to be or to maintain the status quo.

> I wanted to have more of these conversations and the opportunity to say, 'How do you operate in a White man's world and still know that you not going to lose yourself for making the changes you need to make on behalf of all students and not being blackballed in the process?'…Students need to be successful and then, 'How can we, especially as people of color, communicate and do that in a way that is seen and heard by everyone?'

Table 6 identifies the themes on social justice and doing social justice work that were not addressed in the program.

Table 6
Themes on Social Justice and Social Justice Work (SWJ) Not Addressed in the Program

Themes	Questions on Social Justice and Social Justice Work
Clear Definition of Social Justice and Social Justice Work (SJW)	What does this *work look like and entail?* *Where and how do I begin*? How do I bring about *change that is more inclusive of all school and community members* rather than *appearing to be divisive while doing social justice work?*
Understanding What SJW Looks Like for an Aspiring Black Female Leader	What *resistance* could I face *as an aspiring Black female leader in a culture that is dominated by "White male leadership?"* What *landmines* do I avoid? How do I *successfully navigate* them?
Understanding What SJW Looks Like for a Black Female Assistant Principal	If faced with *"discipline policies that I must adhere* to*,"* but are in *direct conflict with my ethical values, what do I do? "How do I navigate this?" "What's the balance?"*

What do *"courageous conversations"* look like *with teachers whom I supervise or even with those who supervise me when confronted in a situation that "is not good for kids*?

How do I have these *conversations in such a way for people to really hear me when "they "don't look like me" or "have not had the same experiences as me?"*

If I am addressing *issues of race, racism, and marginalization*, how do I know if *people will "hear me?" Will I be "blackballed in the process?"*

Note. Themes are bolded in the first columns. Codes and categories aligned to each theme are found in the second column in italics. Statements containing codes and categories are presented in the form of questions with participants' exact words in quotations.

Starratt's Framework – Still to Be Actualized

Next, in comparing our findings to Starratt's (1991, 1996) framework on ethical leadership, we found that while *the ethic of care was present, the ethics of critique and of justice were missing* from the program. As Agatha, Betty, and Cathy suggested, this program needed further development on 1) *critically examining the systems of power and privilege that give rise to inequities in the school system* and 2) *addressing the work involved when moving toward more equitable outcomes for all students*. Although participants did not study Starratt's (1991, 1996) framework, their two suggestions align to Starratt's (1991) ethic of critique and ethic of justice. For example, when *critically examining the inequities in school systems*, one is using Starratt's (1991) theme of critique "to confront the moral issues involved when schools disproportionately benefit some groups in society and fail others" (p. 190). In *reconstructing a blueprint for a more just and ethical social order*, one employs *Starratt's (1991) theme of justice* to reflect on the structures and practices that "serve both the common good and the rights of the individuals in the school" (p. 194).

Conversely, we found that while *social justice was not being defined in the program*, the theme of *"doing what's right by all students"* was immersed throughout the program. For example, Agatha, Betty, and Cathy learned about the *importance of cultivating a positive school culture with all members of the school community*, the *impact of effective communication in building trust,* and *the value of developing authentic relationships with all school members* from the program. They grasped that *leadership is ultimately about people and begins by working with all types of people.* This program helped them to *embrace diversity*, to *recognize different points of views*, and *"to be open to examining multiple perspectives as opposed to just listening to one side*." They learned how to be *an educational leader who cares for, values, and honors all members of their school community*. Ironically, this finding of *"doing what's right by all students"* is comparable to *Starratt's (1991) ethic of care*, which "postulates a level of caring that honors the dignity of each person and desires to see that person enjoy a fully human life" (p. 195). We found that Starratt's (1991) ethic of care was present in both the culture of the program (see Table Five, Lesson One) and in what these women had learned.

These findings support the existing research (see Capper & Young, 2014; Furman, 2012; Jean-Marie et al., 2009) that social justice work for educational administrators is not one-dimensional; rather, it involves a more complex thought process and a multilayered approach. By using Starratt's (1991, 1996)

ethical framework to address social justice work, our findings indicate that one theme (i.e., the ethic of care) is not enough to address what is all involved in doing this type of work. As we propose, Starratt's (1991, 1996) multidimensional ethic (i.e., the ethic of critique, the ethic of justice, and the ethic of care) offers a complete and comprehensive approach for doing social justice work and in the building of an ethical school that educational administrators are entrusted with.

Part Three: Findings From RQ2

Next, we investigate how the program prepared Agatha, Betty, and Cathy for their first administrative role.

Feeling "Prepared" for Their Administrative Role

In spite of challenges brought forth from the pandemic, participants felt "prepared." As indicated in Table 7, nine themes demonstrated how the program had prepared them for the assistant principalship.

Table 7
Themes on of How the Program Prepared Participants for Their First Administrative Role

Themes	Example Responses
Getting Ready for the Job	*"Passing the SLLA without a lot of studying. The professors did a good job of teaching the course and preparing us for the tests."*
	"Interview skills to obtain the first job"
Transferring from a Teacher Leader to an Administrator	*"Being professional at all times."*
	"Presenting yourself in how you speak and talk to others"
Organizational Duties of an Administrator	*"Knowing how to do budget"*
	"Second day on the job I had incident with Title IX and OCR…learned how to do this from the X program"
	"Making sure we were in compliance…my first three weeks"
	"Building a master schedule and scheduling"
	"Writing observations"
Instructional Leader	*"Shaped us into being instructional leaders, more so than your Jill Clark's of education"*
Being Critical Thinkers and Problem Solvers	*"Knowing how to research a problem, put together a plan or proposal, and present it"*

	"Makes me more mindful when I say things, and when I make decisions, I always think about things that I have learned to get me where I am"
	"Forcing me out of my comfort zone made me think about other things"
Being a Caring and Compassionate Leader	"Doing what's right by all students"
Cultivating a Positive School Climate and Culture	Importance of cultivating a positive school culture and climate with all members of the school community
	Impact of effective communication in building trust
Developing Authentic Relationships	"Creating lasting relationships and lifelines with people when asking for help and/or guidance"
Embracing Diversity	"Recognizing different points of views"
	"Being open to examining multiple perspectives as opposed to just listening to one side"

Note. Themes are bolded in the first column. Example responses from participants are found in the second column grouped in accordance to each theme. Codes and categories are in italics, and participants' exact responses are in quotations.

Program Did Not Focus on Social Justice Work or Prepare Participants to Do Social Justice Work

As reflected in Table 7 and confirmed by findings from RQ1, the program *did not focus on social justice as a prevalent theme.* Participants *did not indicate that the program had prepared them to do the work of social justice.* In fact, participants wanted the program to address how to do social justice work in their present roles as Black female assistant principals (see Table 6). While participants felt more *"hesitation"* than *"resistance"* in doing social justice work, they wanted to know how best to *"navigate this work"* and how to have *"critical conversations with colleagues and higher-ups"* without feeling *"blackballed in the process."*

Needing More Time to Learn the Assistant Principalship

While this program provided Agatha, Betty, and Cathy with a *"strong foundation,"* they would like to remain in their roles for two to three more years before embarking on the principalship. They wanted more time *"doing the job in normal school year, and not during a pandemic."*

Other Suggestions for Program Builders

Agatha, Betty, and Cathy discussed three areas for program builders to consider. First, they talked about the *importance of staying abreast on current topics*, such as learning more about *social-emotional learning* and *trauma informed care* in order to assist their students presently. Next, they suggested that future students should spend more time *doing internships in different school settings* so that upon exiting the program, students would know if they should apply for an administrative job in an urban, suburban, or rural setting. Finally, they described the importance of *learning how to effectively communicate to different groups of constituents*, particularly *practicing how to have both critical and courageous conversations in an effort "to do what's right on behalf of all students" and "to change the status quo."*

Limitations

While this study provided us with great insight, sampling of subjects was a limitation. While five participants were originally selected to participate in our study, only three participated. The two members who did not participate may have responded differently than those of which data were collected. One of the participants also received a promotion and became a director in another division her second year. Responses from the second interview only helped to clarify and to verify findings from the first interview. We further employed a series of strategies to build validity and reliability in our study (see Rigor of the Study).

This study looked narrowly at how three Black women perceived social justice to be embedded in their program and how this program prepared them for their first administrative role. During the course of this study, no one could have predicted that these three women would have faced a pandemic in their first administrative role. It is possible that responses may have been different had COVID-19 not occurred. However, because the first author had formulated trusting relationships with participants, interview responses yielded rich, meaningful dialogue and insights that an outside researcher (unfamiliar with the program) would have been unable to capture. More importantly, insights from an underrepresented group brought forth powerful information for program builders to think about when enhancing their coursework on social justice and helping aspiring administrators prepare for the road ahead. According to Maxwell (1992), "the value of a qualitative study may depend on its lack of external generalizability in a statistical sense, it may provide an account of a setting or population that is illuminating" (p. 294).

Discussion and Implications

In this study, we examined two research questions; evidence from our interviews suggested that while there was not a pervasive theme of social justice in the program (RQ1), these women felt "prepared" for their next job (RQ2). They had passed their SLLAs on their first attempt and had landed a job within one year of exiting out of the program. In spite of these successes, Agatha, Betty, and Cathy noted that this program still needed to *"go deeper"* in addressing how to do social justice work. Specifically, they asked for guidance for understanding how to do this work as Black female assistant principals working in a culture they perceived as being dominated by "White male leadership."

In comparing these findings to Starratt's (1991, 1996) framework, we found that while the ethic of caring was present in the culture of the program (see Table Five, Lesson One) and in what students had learned, the themes of critique and of justice were nonexistent. As articulated by participants, more knowledge was needed on the themes of critique and of justice to do social justice work in its entirety. Because social justice work is at the core of what educational administrators do (see Bogotch, 2002; Evans, 2007; Starratt, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, and 2005, Theoharis, 2007), we conclude that social justice cannot be

peripheral to any leadership program: It must be the nucleus of any program – mirrored in its culture, coursework, and student outcomes.

As a first step, educational administrator preparational programs must have clarity in what social justice means and looks like. Specifically, program builders need to have a common understanding of what their students need to know and to achieve in doing social justice work while in their programs and in future leadership roles. Without this common language, it is hard to teach aspiring administrators what social justice is, much less explore all of the intricate details involved with doing this work. Once this common vision has been established, program builders need to identify learning goals and a particular scope and sequence to address student outcomes. An extensive review of modules, assignments, readings, and assessments or projects will help determine which topics, modules, or assessments may need to be reorganized, realigned, and/or revised to ensure that the theme of social justice and Starratt's (1991, 1996) framework are deeply rooted in the program and central to what students need to know and to be able to do.

Heeding to our own advice, we recognize that within our own program further research is required, including a review of archival data (i.e., coursework, assignments, program evaluations, and student evaluations) to determine how best to intertwine social justice and social justice work into our slate of courses. The collective works of Brown, 2004; Capper et al., 2006; Furman, 2012; McKenzie et al., 2008; Jean-Marie et al., 2009; McKenzie et al., 2008 can provide program builders with a starting point of what comprehensive models for social justice leadership preparation look like. This, along with the extensive works of Starratt (1991, 1996, 1998, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2005, 2009, 2011, 2012; Sergiovanni et al., 2014), are all viable suggestions for restructuring what social justice and social justice work could look like in leadership programs. In this study, we adopted Starratt's (1991, 1996) ethical framework for addressing social justice work. However, as we begin to implement our own changes, it is possible that we may use components from other existing models to deepen our students' understanding of social justice work and to elaborate on Starratt's (1991, 1996) framework.

While the aforementioned suggestions are at the macro-level, findings from our study also illuminated key points at the micro-level. It is here that we offer a cautionary note. It should never be the responsibility of any student to be the instructor of another student's sense of critical awareness. That onus lies solely with preparational programs that should equip all students with the experiences and the capacity to uncover and to address the inequities and the injustices in schools (McKenzie et al., 2008). Social justice work is not about being divisive: The work itself involves getting people to recognize their own biases, to be more critically aware of injustices in schools and society, and to work together to bring about changes that are more equitable and suitable for all (McKenzie et al., 2008; Ryan, 2006).

In our study, we learned the importance of *"creating a sense of urgency"* in which aspiring administrators are *critically conscious of issues of race and racism in society and in their schools,* and *work collaboratively with all school members to eliminate these racial inequities and opportunity gaps for students of color*. To assist prospective leaders in developing a deeper sense of critical consciousness, students in preparational programs must grapple with "the moral issues involved when schools disproportionately benefit some groups in society and fail others" (Starratt, 1991, p. 1991). Depending on the course, Starratt's (1991, 1996) framework (as in the ethic of critique) can be used to analyze and to evaluate if structural and organizational arrangements, such as the allocation of resources, the process of hiring staff, the process of grading on a curve, "the absence of important topics in textbooks, the lack of adequate due process for students, [or] the labeling criteria for naming some children gifted and others handicapped…impose a disproportionate advantage to some at the expense of others" (Starratt, 1991, p. 190). Should this be the case, instructors would work with their students using the theme of justice to *reconstruct an alternative pathway that is fairer and more suitable for all student groups involved*. This assignment may include students researching other programs, revising protocols, and/or developing new

procedures and opportunities for a more just practice for all students and those involved. In having students articulate their steps and identify potential obstacles of their plans, students will gain a deeper understanding of the political, cultural, social, human relational, and structural constructs they will have to address when initiating, implementing, and sustaining this type of organizational change. Using the ethic of care, the students would respond to this leadership challenge in an inclusive and caring manner to bring about this new arrangement.

In response to restructuring a fairer and more suitable pathway for all student groups, we recognize that students must have a deep understanding of organizational change theories and leadership practices to plan out what it takes to initiate, implement, and sustain this type of change (Brooks et al., 2007; Ryan, 2006). As resonated in our findings, this would include instructors having conversations with their students about existing power dynamics and power differentials between majority and minority groups to help future leaders think through the resistance that they may encounter from specific groups when enacting social justice. Reflecting on this piece is vital to ensure that there is a more inclusive than divisive approach for bringing about this change.

As illuminated from our findings, conversations about the impact of a leader's race and gender in doing social justice work should be explored so that all aspiring administrators regardless of their gender and race feel prepared for enacting social justice. For example, Agatha, Betty, and Cathy anticipated they might face more resistance in doing social justice work than their White male counterparts because of their race and gender. To address this concern, Capper and Green (2013) discuss the importance of administrator preparation programs preparing all students for understanding organizational theories across epistemologies. According to them (2013), "when leaders experience resistance…, rather than viewing the resistance as personal either to the leader or from the individuals who resist" (p. 65), leaders can use their understanding of epistemological similarities and differences to help guide them in making a more proactive and inclusive response. Here, Theoharis (2007) reminds us that preparation programs should help students develop the leadership skills "to deal with, manage, and cope with resistance" (p. 251) in order to avoid burnout.

Finally, McKenzie et al. (2008) notes that it's "not enough to just 'tell' our university students about the strategies…we must provide opportunities for our students to participate in these activities" (p. 125). As suggested in our findings, our students must practice how to have courageous and critical conversations with teachers whom they will supervise, with colleagues of similar positions, and even with those who will be considered as their supervisors so that future administrators will have the skills sets to offer critical, constructive feedback in such a way that helps to promote social justice (see McKenzie et al., 2008). By understanding how to enter and lead these types of conversations on social justice based on who their audience is, students can initiate the work of social justice regardless if they become a dean of students, an assistant principal, or the principal of the building.

Lessons from our findings highlighted the necessity of social justice work being the cornerstone of educational administrator preparational programs. Through and in this dialogue, we began to see how social justice work could be framed at both the macro and micro levels. While this paper reveals more questions than it does answers, it nonetheless provides us with a roadmap of where to begin and a destination to arrive. Upon implementation, further research will need to be conducted to determine if students gained a complete understanding of both Starratt's (1991, 1996) framework and of doing social justice work.

Conclusion

In a demographically changing and racially diverse population, it is incumbent upon program builders to create not only programs that prepare our students to be effective organizational managers,

instructional leaders, and critical thinkers but also to be ethical leaders who have the capacity, skills, and moral stance to enact social justice for the betterment of all. While passing the SLLA and successfully obtaining and retaining a job are important outcomes for any educational administration leadership program, it is by far only the beginning. By preparing our future leaders to be the guardians of social justice work, we are creating just schools in which all lives matter. In this larger ethical context, all identities are validated, respected, and included. All students have equitable access and opportunities for high-quality learning that is authentic, meaningful, and relevant in defining who they are and who they are to become. It is our hope that findings from this study will inspire program builders to take the time to review their own models and to reimagine new pathways for bringing social justice to the forefront of what they ask their aspiring leaders to reflect, critique, and enact on while in their programs and later in their roles as educational administrators. Social justice and what it demands are not just mere words on a piece of paper. It is both a process and a goal to achieve that requires a thoughtful, multistep approach. This arduous yet rewarding endeavor has the promise to impact and to change the lives of many, and for the better. Educational administration preparational programs by their very nature are in the unique position for making this call to action a reality for many aspiring leaders from one generation to a next. It's time to put forth that effort.

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