

Peer Equity Coaching to Increase Cultural Responsiveness in Teaching and Leading

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Dedication

To the youth in this world who have inspired me to grow in my own culturally responsive teaching and leading, and for whom I continue this work.

Abstract

Race, culture, status, and power influence teacher, student, administrator, and parent interactions in schools every day, often without acknowledgement due to implicit bias, avoidance, and personal and systemic racism. While a direct link between this context and the documented gaps between White students and students from marginalized communities cannot be drawn, the question persists of whether a relationship gap exists and its subsequent influence on students' learning. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate the nature of a peer equity coaching program to increase teachers' racial consciousness and cultural responsiveness in one Minnesota school district with approximately forty percent students of color and Native American students. In particular, this study examined whether transformative learning occurred that led to deeper cultural responsiveness of the adults; what leadership behaviors and actions contributed to its success; and what organizational learning or systemic change was influenced by the peer equity coaching program and supporting professional learning. Grounded theory and the constant comparative method were used to analyze the data gathered in conversational interviews with twenty participating teachers, eight peer equity coaches, seven school administrators, and four district administrators. The study found that significant transformative learning for individuals and for the organization occurred through peer equity coaching, that support for teachers of color increased as a result of organizational learning, and that culturally responsive administrative leadership substantially increased teacher involvement and development of cultural responsiveness. (Key words: Equity coaching, culturally responsive teaching, equity and education, transformative learning).

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Problem

The problems with mental models lie not in whether they are right or wrong--by definition, all models are simplifications. The problems with mental models arise when they become implicit—when they exist below the level of our awareness.

Peter Senge, 2006, p. 166

Peer equity coaching in one public school district is an opportunity for teachers to collegially talk about race, culture, implicit bias, power, systemic oppression and what it means to be a culturally responsive teacher. It is the focused effort for teachers and administrators to become aware of simplified mental models and implicit biases that can lead to lower expectations and exclusionary practices. This study interviewed equity coaches, teachers, and administrators about their experience of the peer equity coaching program in their district.

In this first chapter, I will introduce the nature of the problem in public primary and secondary education and provide the context for this study. This will be followed by the statement of purpose, the guiding research questions of the study, definitions of terms, and a short discussion of the significance of the study.

Problem Statement

Equitable educational attainment is the critical issue facing administrators, teachers, students, and parents in school communities throughout Minnesota. Singleton and Linton (2006) define educational equity as, “raising the achievement of all students while 1) narrowing the gaps between the highest- and lowest-performing students; and 2)

eliminating the racial predictability and disproportionality of which student groups occupy the highest and lowest achievement categories" (p. 46).

Evidence of the lack of equitable attainment in Minnesota is found in some of the largest education opportunity and attainment gaps between White students and African American, Hispanic American, some Asian, and Native American students in the United States of America. In *The State of Minnesota Public Education: A MinnCan Research Report* (Kiener, 2016), it appears that Minnesota students overall are performing fairly well. In the 2015 National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP) fourth-grade reading results, Minnesota ranked fifteenth out of fifty-one states. Additionally, in the NAEP eighth-grade math results, Minnesota ranked second overall out of fifty-one states. However, when the data is disaggregated, it is clear that not all Minnesota students are achieving academically. As seen in Table 1, Minnesota ranks among the highest in achievement gaps by race on the 2015 NAEP. Minnesota also has some of the largest gaps in the 2013 high school graduations rates by race, as shown in Table 2 (Kiener, 2016).

Table 1

Minnesota's National Ranking in Proficiency Gap Size on 2015 National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP) Assessments

| Test | White-African American Gap | White-Latino Gap | White-Asian/Pacific Islander Gap | White-Native American Gap |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 4 th Grade Reading | 14 th of 42 | 13 th of 48 | 3 rd of 29 | 2 nd of 13 |
| 8 th Grade Math | 2 nd of 40 | 3 rd of 48 | 2 nd of 30 | 1 st of 13 |

Note. NAEP does not test every student. Therefore states with small populations of racial/ethnic subgroups have sample sizes too small to report proficiency rates. Source: Kiener, A. (2016)

In addition to the proficiency gaps seen in Table 1, the four year high school graduation rates for White students and students of color vary tremendously. Minnesota was nearly last in the nation in 2013 in graduating its students of color from high school in four years as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Minnesota's National Ranking of 2013 High School Graduation Rates by Race

| Race | National Ranking |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| White | 31 st of 51 |
| African American | 48 th of 51 |
| Latino | 51 st of 51 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 47 th of 50 |
| Native American | 47 th of 49 |

Source: Kiener, A. (2016)

There are many theories about what causes these gaps, including the influence of additional divides in housing, employment, health services, over-incarceration of people of color, and other social indicators. Gloria Ladson Billings (2006) uses the term education debt to describe the generational effect of the lack of access, resources, concern, and disenfranchisement of people of color and American Indians since schooling began in the United States. The attainment gap is not simply due to the quality of education in today's schools, but to the compounding effect of the poorer quality of educational opportunity for generations of people of color and American Indians in this state and in this country.

Hammond (2015) describes how the structures of schools have created racial separations within the system, writing,

We routinely put the less experienced teachers with the neediest students...As a result, culturally and linguistically diverse students don't develop the skills, vocabulary or background knowledge necessary to be ready for rigor...Over time, because of structural racialization in education, we have seen a new type of intellectual apartheid happening in schools, creating dependent learners who cannot access the curriculum and independent learners who have had the opportunity to build the cognitive skills to do deep learning on their own. (p. 31)

The education debt continually grows due to the structural racialization in education.

In Minnesota, there also exists wide disparities in the demographics of the student population as compared to the licensed teacher population as shown in Table 3 (Kiener, 2016). This large representational divide, coupled with the above attainment gaps, calls into question whether there is also a relationship gap due to implicit bias, the lack of racial consciousness, and limited cultural responsiveness between the mostly White faculty and the increasing population of students of color that contributes to the opportunity and attainment gaps (Deyhle & LeCompte, 1994; Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2005; Lareau, 1987; Ridgeway, 2013; Singleton & Linton, 2006; Yosso, 2005).

Table 3

2014-2015 Minnesota Demographics of Public School Students and Licensed Teachers

| Race | Students | Licensed Teachers |
|------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| White | 70.5% | 95.8% |
| African American | 11.5% | 1.1% |
| Latino | 8.4% | 1.0% |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 7.3% | 1.6% |
| Native American | 2.3% | 0.4% |

Source: Kiener, A. (2016)

If a relationship gap exists between teachers and students, how does it manifest in the classroom and in school policies? If the mostly White faculty that is 73% female (Kiener, 2016) does not make an effort or not know how to build relationships or increase their cultural responsiveness, then a relationship gap may surely not only exist but also persist across generations.

One additional indicator suggests a lack of relationship connection between White teachers and students of color and American Indian students. This indicator is the overrepresentation of students of color and American Indian students in suspensions and expulsions. The percentage of enrolled students by race and the percentage of disciplinary incidents by race resulting in a suspension or expulsion were not proportional in Minnesota during the 2014-2015 school year as shown in Table 4. African American and American Indian students were suspended or expelled at nearly four times the rate of their enrollment.

Table 4

2014-2015 Overrepresentation of Suspensions or Expulsions by Race or Ethnicity in Minnesota Public Schools

| Race or Ethnicity | Percentage of K-12 Fall Enrollment | Percentage of Suspensions or Expulsions |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Black | 10% | 38% |
| White | 69.6% | 37% |
| Hispanic | 8.5% | 9.7% |
| American Indian | 1.7% | 7% |
| Multi-Race | 3.7% | 6.3% |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 6.5% | 2.0% |

Source: Kiener, A. 2016

It is disturbing to look at this data. How can students learn if they are not in school? And, this data only shows the number of suspensions and expulsions. Not reported is the number of students of color and American Indian students dismissed from class without being suspended, and are still missing vital instruction.

What is causing this overrepresentation and what do educators need to do to interrupt this cycle? Singleton & Linton (2006) state that “schools are not designed to educate students of color, and educators continue to lack the will, skill, knowledge, and capacity to affirm racial diversity” (p. 5). Public schools all across Minnesota need to do things differently if they expect different attainment results and rates of suspension.

Context of the Study

Johnson Public Schools (pseudonym), the subject of this study, has made several programming, procedural, and strategic decisions in an attempt to do things differently. One major shift in Johnson Public Schools is the subject of this qualitative study. Led by transformative teacher-leaders, the teachers’ union along with the school district administration transformed their licensed teacher peer review system into a peer equity-coaching program. Their shared goal was to increase teachers’ and administrators’ racial consciousness, cultural responsiveness, and teaching effectiveness for students of color and American Indian students.

Peer equity-coaching followed the development of a ninth-grade transition program for all students that had been created a decade earlier. That transition program provided necessary supports for all ninth-grade students during a critical transitional year, and resulted in more students passing their classes, and significantly more students

graduating from high school. The program has received national recognition and funding to expand to other districts across the country.

This is a school district that is committed to eliminating the predictability of academic attainment based upon race and socioeconomic status. More details about Johnson Public Schools will appear in Chapter 3.

Statement of Purpose

Mezirow (1997) describes transformative learning as “the process of effecting change in a *frame of reference*. Adults have acquired a coherent body of experience—associations, concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses—frames of reference that define their life world. Frames of reference are the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences” (p. 5). Mezirow (1997) writes that adults transform their frames of reference through “critical reflection on the assumptions upon which our interpretations, beliefs, and habits of mind or points of view are based” (p. 7).

Peer equity coaches provided opportunities for teachers’ self-reflection through critical discourse. The purpose of this study was to investigate the nature of the peer to peer equity-coaching program in Johnson Public Schools in order to understand, a) whether transformative learning occurred leading to deeper cultural responsiveness of teachers and administrators; b) what leadership characteristics, behaviors, and actions contributed to the success of peer equity coaching; and c) what organizational learning or systemic change was influenced by the peer equity coaching program. These general questions led to the specific questions of the study.

Research Questions

This qualitative study was guided by three specific questions. These were:

- (1) What is the nature of a peer equity coaching conversation and does it lead to transformative adult learning?
- (2) What is the nature of administrative leadership to foster organizational learning through peer equity coaching programs?
- (3) Is there evidence that peer equity coaching could affect systemic change in the capacity to create equitable learning environments and opportunities for students of color and Native American students?

To provide context and a shared understanding of key terms used within this study, the following definitions are provided.

Definitions of Terms

For the purposes of this paper, I have developed the following definitions of key terms based on current literature and understanding.

Achievement Gap—the predictable gap that exists between white students and students of color and Native American students in annual growth in learning.

Achievement refers to how much a student progresses in their learning annually as measured by the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments.

Attainment Gap—the predictable gap that exists between white students and students of color and Native American students in standardized testing. Attainment refers to measurement of learning at expected levels such as the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments or the National Association of Education Progress tests.

Cultural Responsiveness—similar to intercultural competence, cultural responsiveness refers to the required action of educators to respond to and interact with students and parents from cultures other than their own. Cultural responsiveness includes knowledge of self and others, understanding the structure of social relationships, recognizing that conceptions of knowledge are varied across cultures, and acting dynamically based upon that knowledge and belief.

Dominant Culture—typically refers to power dynamics held by one culture based upon racial differences. For the purposes of this paper, dominant culture refers to the culture of the public school system in the United States of America. The historical construct, language, power, practices, policies, and basic assumptions have been established and passed along since the early school system was established for White males whose fathers were in power at that time. While there are regional differences, the dominant cultural power in the American school system tends to be associated with White, middle class, Christian, English-speaking culture.

Equity—providing educational access and opportunity based upon the learner's individual needs so that the learner may attain educational levels anticipated at each grade level.

Implicit Bias—ingrained, unconscious habits of thought developed from prior learning and experiences within cultural contexts that may limit understanding of others' experiences and may differ from the individual's experiences.

Intercultural Competence—the ability to shift cultural perspective and adapt cultural behavior based upon cultural similarities or differences. A person never becomes

fully competent in intercultural communication, but progresses along a continuum of competence within the cultural contexts experienced.

Opportunity Gap—the gap that predictably exists for low-income students and students of color and American Indian students who do not have economic or cultural access to the dominant White, middle income experiences, values, practices, assumptions, language, and generational educational attainment.

Peer Coaching—a formal partnership model of non-evaluative feedback on teacher planning, practice, student performance, relationships, and reflection provided for licensed teachers by peer-licensed teachers. It is non-evaluative in that the coaching does not administratively contribute to job performance evaluation, though it is evaluative in that the coach is seen to have more expertise in the field, coaching the teacher to increase knowledge, skills, and capacity for growth.

Peer Equity Coaching—a formal partnership model of non-evaluative feedback on teacher planning, practice, student performance, relationships, and reflection provided for licensed teachers by peer licensed teachers with the goal of increasing racial consciousness, intercultural competence, and cultural responsiveness. It is non-evaluative in that the coaching does not administratively contribute to job performance and evaluation, though it is evaluative in that the coach is seen have more expertise in the field, coaching the teacher in reflection to increase knowledge, skills, and capacity for growth.

Racial Consciousness—the awareness of when and how race is present in interactions.

White Privilege—the unquestioned, unearned sets of advantages, status, opportunities, and choices afforded white people, established and passed along through historical dominance, power, and exclusionary practices.

Significance of the Study

Phillips (2011) writes, “Wherever a social problem is found, a social scientist or an educational researcher can find an opportunity to make a contribution” (p. 26-27). The current situation of Minnesota demonstrates disparities in the attainment and engagement levels between white students and students of color and Native American students in Minnesota. The data has shown the disparities in discipline, in academic attainment, and in high school graduation. Even though districts are adding intervention programs, support programs, and remediation programs, the predictability of attainment and over-suspensions persists. Could this be due to a relational gap between teachers and administrators and their students of color and Native American students? This is the social problem to which I seek to make a contribution. Can peer equity coaching guide teachers and administrators to transform their ways of thinking, feeling, behaving, and believing regarding their relationships with and expectations of all of their students?

Currently, Minnesota law requires that licensed teachers receive feedback three times annually from peer coaches or as members of professional learning communities (Teachers and Other Educators, 2014). Johnson Public Schools has determined that not only would their peer coaches provide feedback in curriculum and instruction as the law requires, but also in becoming culturally responsive, critically reflective teachers regarding race and culture.

The significance of this study is that peer equity coaching may contribute to increased teacher self-awareness, culturally responsive pedagogical skills, and broader use of culturally informed curriculum, which could then lead to closing the attainment and opportunity gaps and reducing suspensions for students of color and American Indian students. The study looks to determine how this unique model contributes to deeper cultural responsiveness of the adults in the system; what administrators can do to support and sustain coaching; and what organizational learning occurred as part of the coaching program. Other school districts or organizations wishing to build a similar model may benefit from this study.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized in eight chapters. Chapter 1 includes the introduction to the problem, the problem statement, the context of the study and the statement of purpose. These were followed by the research questions, definitions of terms, and the significance of the study. Chapter 2 reviews three prominent bodies of relevant literature that informed the study. Chapter 3 describes the research methods and design of the study.

Because three separate groups of educators were interviewed for this study, the initial findings and emergent themes are provided in three chapters. In Chapter 4, I present the initial findings from interviews with equity coaches. Chapter 5 contains the initial findings and emergent themes from the teachers, and Chapter 6 includes the initial findings and emergent themes from the administrators. In Chapter 7, I provide an analysis and synthesis of the key findings of the study. Finally, in Chapter 8, I present the conclusions, recommendations, and implications for further study.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

"Stereotypes are hard to pin down because so often they are put into play without any feeling of personal animus or vengeance...Stereotypes do not take special effort to acquire. Quite the opposite--they are acquired effortlessly, and take special effort to discount" (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013, p. 109).

Prior to developing a methodology or conducting research, it is critical to look to the work of previous scholars to inform this qualitative study of peer equity-coaching. Three bodies of literature were reviewed and are presented here.

This chapter begins with a review of the literature that identifies, defines, and discusses bias or implicit association, mind-sets, intercultural competence, and their interaction with cultural responsiveness. This is an important body of literature to review as this gets to the heart of peer equity coaching, which is individuals developing cultural responsiveness by understanding implicit bias and mind-sets through transformative peer equity coaching.

A second body of literature describes the elements of adult learning theory, transformative learning theory, and critical self-reflection. These elements are necessary for adults to enter into a learning situation and to potentially transform habituated ways of doing, knowing, and believing.

The third body of literature includes a brief overview of the nature of organizational and school culture, followed by a discussion of leadership in school organizations, with an emphasis on culturally responsive leadership. Connected to this literature is the scholarship that defines and describes peer coaching. In connecting the scholarship surrounding organizational culture, leadership, and culturally responsive

leadership to the discussion of coaching, we can see how organizational learning is developed through peer coaching.

The work of previous scholars provides the foundation of understanding how peer equity coaching may impact and even transform the nature of relationships, opportunities, and organizational culture in public school organizations. Through their work, we can see the nexus of bias, mind-set, and cultural responsiveness; adult learning theory, transformative adult learning, and critical self-reflection; and culturally responsive school leadership and transformative leadership. The synthesis of these three bodies of literature creates a framework for understanding the transformative individual and organizational learning possible through one public school district's peer equity-coaching program to increase the racial consciousness and cultural responsiveness of educators.

Implicit Bias, Mind-sets, and Cultural Responsiveness

Several scholars have demonstrated a gap between teachers' intentions and their actions. Teachers with the best intentions implicitly have lower expectations for students of color and Native American students and students from lower socio-economic homes (Atwater, 2008; Entwisle, Alexander, & Olson, 2005; Firestone & Louis, 1999; Kao & Thompson, 2003; Lareau 1987; Singleton & Linton, 2006). Brookfield (1995b) writes:

One of the hardest things teachers learn is that the sincerity of their intentions does not guarantee the purity of their practice. The cultural, psychological, and political complexities of learning, and the ways in which power complicates all human relationships (including those between students and teachers) means that teaching can never be innocent.... Teaching innocently means assuming that the

meanings and significance we place on our actions are the ones that *students* [emphasis added] take from them. (p. 1)

Students learn from teachers' actions, not from their intentions. The result of this gap is that students experience professed high expectations, but receive implicitly differential and preferential actions for middle and upper income students and White students.

This may seem like a harsh reality for anyone entering the teaching profession wishing to make the world a better place. However, implicit biases, mental models, mind-sets, stereotyping, and racism influence each person's actions and reactions, often without consciously perceiving their influence (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013; Dweck, 2000; Dweck, 2006; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Senge, 2006; Singleton & Linton, 2006). To successfully teach all students, educators must first become aware of these implicit biases.

Implicit bias and mental models.

Banaji and Greenwald (2013) have written extensively about implicit biases in *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People*. They describe the mind as an "automatic association-making machine" that links new words, pictures, faces, or actions with prior experiences. They use the term "mindbugs" to describe, "ingrained habits of thought that lead to errors in how we perceive, remember, reason, and make decisions" (p. 4). They describe several forms of mindbugs including misinformation effect, availability, anchoring, and social mindbugs.

The misinformation effect is observed when one's memory is altered through subtle change in language when asked about an event, such as they "hit the other car" or they "smashed into the other car" (Loftus, 1974, as cited in Banaji & Greenwald, 2013).

Another example is students were *fighting* rather than students were *arguing*. Availability draws on events or things seen, read, or experienced most frequently as the correct association for a novel experience. Anchoring is when the mind uses whatever information is available as a starting point to understand new information.

Banaji and Greenwald (2013) describe social mindbugs as those that occur when we fail to see individuals as individuals, but as representatives of the social group to which we assume they belong. We make automatic decisions about people based upon the group membership we perceive and the attributes we have collected consciously or unconsciously about that group through interactions, literature, media entertainment, news media, discussion, and so on. Social groups can include a person's race, ethnicity, age, gender, religion, class, sexuality, disability, physical attractiveness, profession, personality, and others.

To bring awareness to implicit associations, Greenwald developed the Implicit Association Test (IAT) in 1994 to measure a person's attitude—associations that link concepts to positive or negative responses (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013). Findings demonstrate that almost seventy-five percent of those who take the Race IAT reveal an automatic White preference that "signals discriminatory behavior (not overt racism, but differences in comfort, trust, etc.)" (p. 47). This finding demonstrates that, even though individuals think they are not discriminatory in their associations, their unconscious minds influence their rational selves. Educators, who believe they are providing the same consequences for all students demonstrating the same behavior, may not be.

Could this be a factor in the over-representation of suspensions and expulsions of African American, Native American, and Latino/a/x students (Minnesota Department of

Education, 2016)? For example, could teachers and administrators unconsciously associate students of color with choosing negative behavior deserving of suspension while simultaneously associating White students as making mistakes deserving of a second chance even when the same behavior is observed? Becoming aware of these implicit biases may influence individuals' future actions and interactions with youth.

Banaji and Greenwald (2013) write, "to the extent that mindbugs slant how we see, remember, reason, and judge, they reveal a particular disparity in us: between our intentions and ideals, on one hand, and our behavior and actions, on the other" (p. 20). To become better decision-makers in the classroom, educators must become aware of the mindbugs influencing their unconscious minds.

Banaji and Greenwald (2013) describe how, without conscious effort, individuals fall prey to social stereotypes because the mind is built to sort all information into categories automatically and use mindbugs to do the sorting. They write that stereotypes are "hard to pin down because so often they are put into play without any feeling of personal animus or vengeance...Stereotypes do not take special effort to acquire. Quite the opposite—they are acquired effortlessly, and take special effort to discount" (p. 109).

When stereotypes, protocols, classroom rules, or district policy are based upon hidden biases and remain unquestioned, the status quo remains intact and those with power and privilege maintain their advantage. Banaji and Greenwald (2013) and others describe that it is often difficult for people in the dominant social group to see their privilege because of the nature of hidden biases and the assumption that status quo provides equal opportunity for all (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002; Devine, Forscher, Austin, & Cox, 2012; Feagin, 2013; Gay, 2010; Johnson, 2006; Khalifa, Gooden, &

Davis, 2014; McIntosh, 1988). Bringing into the conscious mind the effect of privilege and its implicit bias creates disequilibrium for the mind and is often met with resistance.

Other researchers discuss implicit bias using different terminology and imagery. Peter Senge (2006) discussed implicit biases in terms of mental models as “deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action” (p. 8). In organizations, mental models limit new insights because “they conflict with deeply held internal images of how the world works, images that limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting” (p. 162). The mental models held by individual members of teams and shared as an organization can limit the organization’s growth.

Larrivee (2000) envisions personal actions being filtered through multiple layers of screens, each which hold past experiences, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, the individual’s feelings and mood, and personal agendas and aspirations. Each layer of the filter influences an individual’s choice of response. Larrivee (2000) writes,

Beliefs about students' capacity and willingness to learn, assumptions about the behavior of students, especially those from different ethnic and social backgrounds, and expectations formulated on the basis of our own value system can potentially be sources for responding inappropriately to students. (p. 299)

Response to an action occurs almost instantaneously after it is perceived and travels through the multiple screens of implicit biases and mind-sets coupled with mood, status, and aspirations of the individual. Larrivee (2000) suggests that, to change their responses, teachers must slow down their thinking to develop an awareness of the layers of screens before responding.

Similar to Larrivee's (2000) acknowledgement that personal agendas and aspirations are filters through which we assess a situation, Galaskiewicz (1985) and Ridgeway (2014) discuss how status and associational biases impact relationships and decision-making. Galaskiewicz (1985) found that, when giving officers from foundations or businesses were uncertain of a non-profit organization, they contacted a professional with higher status to make funding decisions. In addition, giving officers were often members of networks who shared information and opinions of the perceived worthiness or status of particular non-profits. This information quickly solidified across the network of funders, and non-profit organizations found it difficult to change the opinion of the like-minded network of giving officers. Once a status of worthiness was assigned to a non-profit by the funder, it was hard to change that perception.

Ridgeway (2014) defined status biases as the implicit assumptions about who is "better," more competent, and more deserving of jobs, promotions, money, and power. Status biases feed the presumption that those with higher status and position have "fairly won their better jobs and higher incomes on the basis of their own superior merit" (Ridgeway, 2014, p. 4). Associational preference biases shape the selection of people with whom individuals form alliances and favor in exchange for information, opportunities, and affection. Individuals see that, "Because the status of those with whom an actor associates affects that actor's own status in a situation (i.e., status 'spreads' through association), this creates systematic incentives for actors to associate with higher status others" (Ridgeway, 2014, p. 6). In addition, individuals will likely disassociate with those who are not perceived to have status. Ridgeway (2014) summarizes the impact of these two biases working together, writing, "The systematic result, again, is to

direct people from higher status groups smoothly toward positions of power and resources while creating network and, therefore, informational and opportunity barriers for those from lower status groups” (p. 7).

Ridgeway (2014) also discusses what happens when these assumptions are challenged, writing “...defense of the status hierarchy results in more intentionally hostile actions to constrain lower status individuals who are perceived to ‘go too far’” (p. 7). By uncritically operating within these status and associational biases, by disassociating with those with perceived lower status, and by creating fear in lower status groups, status quo and opportunity gaps remain the same. Complicating the awareness of implicit bias, mental models, and status is an individual’s mind-set regarding intelligence and perceptions of self and others, as will be described in the next section.

Mind-sets.

Carol Dweck (2000, 2006, 2010) has contributed multiple studies focused on the self-theories of students regarding their personal intelligence. Students with fixed mind-sets believe their intelligence is carved in stone, that they possess a fixed amount of intelligence. Students with a growth mind-set believe that they can cultivate their basic qualities through effort and application of strategies they already possess. Dweck’s (2006) research found that students with a fixed mind-set were worried about proving how smart they were. When confronted with a challenge, they often gave up, feeling they just were not smart enough to complete the problem. Individuals with growth mind-sets embraced challenges as opportunities to learn new strategies, to apply the tools they already possessed, and to grow as a person.

Dweck (2010) and others have found that teaching students to have a growth mind-set raises their grades and achievement test scores significantly (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007; Good, Aronson, & Inzlicht, 2003). In addition, students who have negative stereotypes of their academic abilities can eliminate any achievement gap with growth mind-sets (Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002; Blackwell et al., 2007; Good et al., 2003; Steele & Aronson, 1995). Dweck (2010) writes that, "If stereotyped students have a growth mind-set—even if they grant that their group may have underperformed historically—they believe that through their effort and the support of educators they can develop their abilities" (p. 29). These researchers demonstrated repeatedly that growth mind-sets lead to greater effort, enjoyment of learning, perseverance in the face of stereotype threat and/or challenge, and increased academic performance.

In expanding her research, Dweck (2000, 2006, 2010) found that the self-theories of fixed and growth mind-sets also applied to how individuals perceived others. Individuals with fixed mind-sets not only held static opinions of their abilities, but also felt confident in quickly judging others' abilities and personalities. Dweck (2015) writes, "This means that once they have decided that someone is or is not capable, they are not very open to new information to the contrary. And they may not mentor people whom they have decided are not capable" (p. 28). Stereotyping is a natural outgrowth of their beliefs about human beings—that individuals have fixed traits and one judgment is enough to know if the person is bad or good (Dweck, 2000). Individuals with growth mind-sets are less likely to judge people's actions as static. Rather, they understand that actions occur in context and are malleable.

Dweck (2006) found that teachers with a fixed mind-set view themselves as “finished products” employed to impart knowledge. On the other hand, teachers with growth mindsets “tell students the truth and then give them the tools to close the gap” (Dweck, 2006, p.199). Applying this understanding to the current educational context, we must ask, “How can we expect students to succeed if they possess a fixed mind-set of their academic ability, who uncritically face adults’ stereotypes of limited academic ability and character, and who are paired with teachers with fixed mind-sets of their own ability to teach and the students to learn?” If both parties—the student and the teacher—give up when facing challenge, neither will experience growth in their skills, and both may deem themselves failures in the situation. Conversely, those with growth mind-sets acknowledge the challenge of learning, use the strategies they have already learned, and exercise greater effort to understand that which is difficult (Dweck, 2000, 2006, 2010).

In the next section, I will introduce how growth in intercultural competence can increase cultural responsiveness, neither of which is possible with a fixed mind-set regarding cultural understanding.

Intercultural competence and cultural responsiveness.

Several authors have discussed intercultural competence as a continuum of ability or comfort to engage in intercultural interactions. Van Odenhoven and Benet-Martinez (2015) list five dimensions of intercultural competence as cultural empathy, open-mindedness, emotional stability, flexibility, and social initiative. Byram, Gribkova, and Starkey (2002) describe the components of intercultural competence to be “knowledge, skills and attitudes, complemented by the values one holds because of one's belonging to a number of social groups” (p. 7). They specify intercultural attitudes that promote

learning as those of curiosity, openness and a “readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own...to relativise one’s own values, beliefs and behaviors”.

Hammer (2016) describes intercultural competence as "the capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural differences and commonalities" (p. 28) when interacting with a culture other than one’s own. Hammer (2016) and Bennett and Bennett (2004) describe two levels of culture. Objective culture is seen in the visible products, artifacts, and institutions created by a group of people such as economic systems, arts, holidays, and food. Subjective culture is the “patterns of interpretations (values, beliefs, perceptions) and behavior learned from one's group that guides individual and group activity” (Hammer, 2016, p. 25).

Hammond (2015) describes culture as “the way that every brain makes sense of the world” (p. 22). She describes three levels of culture: surface, shallow, and deep culture. Surface culture is made up of the observable elements of culture such as food, clothing, and dress. Shallow culture is “made up of the unspoken rules around everyday social interactions and norms, such as courtesy, attitudes toward elders...” (p. 22). Hammond (2015) states that it is at this level that, “we interpret certain behaviors as disrespectful, offensive, or hostile” (p. 22). Deep culture is “made up of tacit knowledge and unconscious assumptions that govern our world view” (p. 23). Challenges to cultural values at this level “produce culture shock or trigger the brain’s fight or flight response” (p. 23).

Milton Bennett (2004) developed the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, a continuum of intercultural competence in six stages ranging from

ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism, from viewing one's own culture as "the way things are" to experiencing "one's own beliefs and behaviors as just one organization of reality among many viable possibilities" (p. 1). The first three stages reflect ethnocentric or monocultural attitudes and behaviors. The second three stages indicate the development of ethnorelativism and reflect the attitudes and behaviors of individuals who hold more complex views of cultural differences (Bennett, 2004; Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Hammer, 2016; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). Bennett and Bennett (2004) write, "The underlying assumption of the model is that as one's *experience of cultural difference* becomes more sophisticated, one's competence in intercultural relations increases" (p. 152).

Educators, parents, students, and school community members are all influenced by their own implicit biases, stereotypes, mind-sets, and cultures present in our multicultural, multi-racial world. Geneva Gay (2010a) writes that, "racial, ethnic, and cultural attitudes and beliefs are always present, often problematic, and profoundly significant in shaping teaching conceptions and actions" (p. 143). Deyhle and LeCompte (1999) write,

The presence of cultural boundaries, by themselves, is a politically neutral phenomenon. However, cultural boundaries can become politically charged when the ideas of one group are granted more legitimacy than those of another group, or are imposed on others. Under these circumstances, cultural boundaries become cultural borders and serve as the genesis of misunderstanding, abuse of power, and oppression. (p. 156-157)

Developing intercultural competence, an understanding of one's personal culture in relationship to others' cultures, can assist in navigating these cultural boundaries.

Singleton and Lipton (2006) call out the importance of isolating race in navigating cultural boundaries. They focus on the development of racial consciousness, or the degree of awareness of knowing "how and when race permeates personal and professional interactions" (p. 77). Bringing implicit and unchallenged racial and cultural biases to consciousness is the first step of becoming more culturally responsive educators (Brown, 2006; Cooper, 2009; Gay, 2010a; Goldenberg, 2014; Howard, 1999; Khalifa, Gooden & Davis, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Singleton & Lipton, 2006; Sleeter, 2001).

In a comprehensive literature review of culturally responsive school leadership, Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis (2016) found the term *cultural responsiveness* to be most consistently used by researchers of education, and elucidate that it emphasizes action on the part of the educator. Ladson-Billings (1995) identifies three components of culturally responsive teaching as the conceptions of self and others, the structure of social relations, and the conceptions of knowledge.

Geneva Gay (2010a) states that, to become culturally responsive, prospective teachers "need to confront their attitudes and beliefs as well as develop content knowledge bases, pedagogical skills, and interactional abilities for teaching culturally diverse curriculum and students" (p. 150). Gay defines culturally responsive teaching as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them" (2010b, p. 31). Culturally responsive teachers and administrators

seek to expand their cultural competence and racial consciousness while also developing curricular knowledge, pedagogical skills, and an inclusive community.

Hammond (2015) describes four areas of culturally responsive teaching. These are awareness, learning partnerships, information processing, and community building. Culturally responsive teachers develop an awareness of their place in a racialized society and “place instruction within the larger sociopolitical context” (p. 18). Secondly, as learning partners, culturally responsive teachers build trust with their students and “take advantage of the fact that our brains are wired for connection” (p. 19). Third, culturally responsive teachers guide information processing for their students. They are the “conduit that helps students process what they are learning. They mediate student learning based on what they know about how the brain learns and students' cultural models” (p. 19). Last, the culturally responsive teacher creates learning environments where students feel safe enough to take risks in their learning. They try “to create an environment that communicates care, support, and belonging in ways that students recognize” (pp. 19-20).

To become culturally responsive, leaders and teachers must bring to consciousness the implicit racial, social, and status biases held within. They must check themselves and their students for fixed or growth mind-sets. Furthermore, culturally responsive teachers and leaders must use this self-awareness to deepen their intercultural competence, their pedagogical skills, and their historical, political and social knowledge of students and families to develop classrooms with high expectations and high support from the students’ perspective. An individual does not acquire these skills, mind-sets,

and knowledge without hard work. In the next section, the literature will show that transformative adult learning can occur through critical reflection and dialogue.

Adult Learning, Transformative Learning Theory, and Critical Self-Reflection

Adults and children have always been engaged in the process of learning for various purposes. Learning can lead to new technical, social, or interactive skills; deeper knowledge or understanding; or new inventions. In this section, adult learning theory, transformative learning theory, and critical self-reflection will be reviewed to understand how to shape adult learning experiences that expand culturally responsive behaviors from the classroom to the boardroom.

Adult Learning Theory.

Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2014) emphasize the uniqueness of adult learning as compared to pedagogy in that adults have acquired multiple years of life experiences that inform their thinking, beliefs, and attitudes. John Dewey (1938) describes education as the process of experience, democracy, continuity (each experience is connected to those that preceded it), and interaction. Rogers (2002) unpacks Dewey's description of education as the combination of experience plus continuity plus reflection. Education does not occur simply because a person has experienced an event, but that the event is consciously connected to the person's prior experience, and reflection on that experience is what makes meaning.

Nearly forty years after Dewey (1938) researched and wrote about the purpose and process of education, Malcolm Knowles began his research surrounding adult education. Knowles adopted the use of the European term andragogy, which he defined

as the “art and science of helping adults learn,” (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2014, p. 304). Andragogy is based on six assumptions. These are: (a) the learner’s need to know, (b) the learner’s self concept, (c) the role of learner’s prior experiences, (d) the learner’s readiness to learn, (e) the learner’s orientation to learning, and (f) the learner’s motivation. A description of each of these assumptions follows.

The first assumption is that adults need to know why they need to learn something before they will undertake the effort. Secondly, adults want to be responsible for their own learning. They may rely on teachers or professional consultants for guidance, but want to be responsible for what and how they learn. Third, the adult learner is rich with a history of prior experiences. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2014) write, "...any situation in which the participants' experiences are ignored or devalued, adults will perceive this as rejecting not only their experience, but rejecting themselves as persons" (p. 45).

The fourth assumption, adults’ readiness to learn, describes how adults will learn new ideas or techniques as they are developmentally ready and when the new information will improve their coping skills. The fifth assumption, orientation to learning, is focused on how the new learning will improve their current life situation, whether personally or professionally. The last assumption, motivation to learn, addresses whether an adult is moved by internal motivators such as improved self-concept, interest, or job satisfaction or external motivators such as job promotion or increased salary. In these final three assumptions, if the adult doesn’t believe the new information will improve their situation, the adult will not engage in the learning. In the context of this study, if a teacher does not

believe increasing their cultural responsiveness will improve the situation, they likely will not engage in the learning.

In addition to meeting the components of andragogy, humans require a sense of physical, social, and emotional safety in order for cognitive processing to occur (Hammond, 2015; Sousa, 2011). Sousa (2011), (as cited in Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2014) describes the neuroscience of learning and the brain. This is a topic far too involved to fully include here, but the finding is relevant to this study because no learning can take place without a sense of emotional, social, and physical safety. Knowles, Holton & Swanson (2014) write the following:

According to Sousa (2011) there is a hierarchy of response to sensory data in short-term memory. The brain's main job is to help its owner survive. Thus, any sensory input that is perceived as a threat sends a rush of adrenaline to the brain and focuses the brain on those stimuli and blocks other stimuli. Similarly, emotional data takes a high priority. When an individual responds emotionally, the complex rational processes are shut down and the limbic system takes over...The clear implication of this is that learners must feel physically safe and emotionally secure in the learning event before they will turn their attention to the cognitive processing. (Sousa, 2011 as cited in Knowles, Holton & Swanson, p. 220-221)

Hammond (2015) describes the reaction to threat as an:

amygdala hijack. When the amygdala [the fear sensor of the brain] sounds its alarm with cortisol, all other cognitive functions such as learning, problem

solving, or creative thinking stop. An amygdala hijack leads to our natural "fight, flight, freeze, or appease" responses. (p. 40)

So, to engage in any cognitive processing, adults must first feel a sense of safety along with the six components of andragogy described above.

Without meeting these assumptions, efforts to engage adults in professional or personal learning may simply be ineffective. Transformative learning uses this base of andragogical assumptions along with Dewey's (1938) emphasis on reflection as the process by which adults transform their thinking.

Transformative Learning Theory.

Mezirow (1997) defines transformative learning as a "process of effecting change in a *frame of reference*" (p. 5). Many researchers have built upon the foundations of Dewey (as cited in Rogers, 2002) and Knowles (2014) in recognizing that adults have acquired multiple experiences in their lives. Those experiences, largely shaped through cultural and familial traditions and beliefs, become the frame of reference or implicit assumptions or mental models from which individuals act (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013; Bennett, 2004; Brookfield, 1995a; Brown, 2006; Cochran-Smith, 2000; Hammer, 2016; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003; Hammond, 2015; Hines & Atherton, 2015; Mezirow, 1997; Senge, 2006; Taylor, 2008; Utt & Tochluk, 2016). To effect change in those frames of reference, transformative adult educators use the andragogical assumptions described above with the three steps of transformative learning to create new understanding.

The stages of the transformative learning process are (a) the experience itself, (b) self-reflection, and (c) discourse. To be motivated to learn, an adult may experience

some life event or major transition that creates a disorienting dilemma (Calleja, 2014; Mezirow, 1997) or it can be an awareness of a particular assumption not previously considered (Brown, 2006). This disorienting event or disequilibrium, as Dewey (as cited in Rogers, 2002) referred to it, provides the learner with a chance to self-reflect on the experience in one of four ways.

Mezirow (1997) describes these four choices for self-reflection. First, they can elaborate the existing frame of reference by seeking further evidence to support their current point of view. A second choice is to seek and establish new negative points of view by “focusing on perceived shortcomings, as dictated by our propensity for ethnocentricity” (p. 7). A third choice, opposite of the second, is to transform their point of view by noticing misconceptions they held. The reflection may lead to a more positive view of the experience. The fourth option is to “transform our ethnocentric habits of mind by becoming aware and critically reflective of our generalized bias in the way we view groups” (p. 7). Self-reflection about an experience does not require isolation, but benefits from critical discourse.

The third step of Mezirow’s (1997) process of transformative learning is discourse. Researchers have noted that disorienting dilemmas that lead to critical self-reflection often are emotionally charged since they challenge those well-developed, often unconscious frames of reference (Brookfield, 1995b; Dewey, as cited in Rogers, 2002; Hammond, 2015; Larrivee, 2000; Mezirow, 1997; Mezirow, 1998; Rogers, 2002). Mezirow (1997) writes that, “Discourse is necessary to validate what and how one understands, or to arrive at a best judgment regarding a belief. In this sense learning is a social process, and discourse becomes central to making meaning” (p. 10).

Rogers (2002) writes, “sharing inquiry helps the learner to articulate the reflection” (p. 857) and describes three benefits of collaborative reflection through discourse: (a) the affirmation of one's experience and its impact, (b) viewing the experience from another's perspective broadens options for understanding, and (3) collegial support sustains the energy to engage in the process of inquiry. Because an adult will act upon his or her reflection of an experience, and that action will be informed by prior experiences, implicit biases, and cultural responsiveness, a deeper look at critical self-reflection in light of transformative learning is warranted.

Critical self-reflection.

Dewey (1938, as cited in Rogers, 2002) describes reflection as the “active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends,” and views it as the basis of education (p. 850). Reflection involves both cognitive discipline as well as emotional discipline to remain open to new ideas and interpretations. Dewey (1933, as cited in Rogers, 2002) writes, “One can think reflectively only when one is willing to endure suspense and to undergo the trouble of searching” (p. 852).

Mezirow (1998) defines critical self-reflection of an assumption as “critique of a premise upon which the learner has defined a problem” (p. 186). Larrivee (2000) states, “critical reflection involves examination of personal and professional belief systems, as well as the deliberate consideration of the ethical implication and impact of practices” (p. 294). In applying critical self-reflection within the context of education, Brown (2006) writes,

Critical inquiry involves the conscious consideration of the moral and ethical implications and consequences of schooling practices on students. Self-reflection adds the dimension of deep examination of personal assumptions, values, and beliefs. Critical reflection merges the two terms and involves the examination of personal and professional belief systems, as well as the deliberate consideration of the ethical implications and impact of practices." (p. 720)

This connection between personal assumptions or bias and the schooling practices in which educators and students engage is the nexus for applying transformative learning in schools.

Critical reflection takes time, courage, and oftentimes, the guidance of others. Brookfield (1995b) writes, "When we have seen our practice through others' eyes we are in a much better position to speak and behave in ways that ensure that a consistency of meaning exists between us, our students, and our colleagues" (p. 18-19). Critical reflection through discourse may connect educators to the broader social constructs of power, race, and cultural assumptions.

Adult educators and researchers have used multiple methods to increase critical reflection. Some of these are reflective journaling, writing cultural autobiographies, experiencing privilege walks or racial arcs, reviewing life histories, reading and discussing books or articles, interviewing a person of a race different than the interviewer, interviewing elders, and using a simulation of unequal opportunity (Brown, 2006; Cochran-Smith, 2000; Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Hines & Atherton, 2015; McIntosh, 1988; Sleeter, 2001). In each of these methods, reflective discourse was

utilized to assist learners in understanding how to identify bias and stereotype and then how to act upon the knowledge to change the learner's frame of references.

Devine, Forscher, Austin and Cox (2012) taught undergraduates five specific strategies for becoming aware of and countering stereotypic thinking. These are stereotype replacement, counter-stereotypic imaging, individuation, perspective taking, and increasing opportunities for contact. A description of each of these follows.

Stereotype replacement involves recognizing a stereotypical response, reflecting on why the stereotype exists, and then replacing the stereotype with an unbiased response. For example, replacing the stereotype that tall African American males play basketball with the recognition of the stereotype and generating an unbiased response that he may be a scientist, computer technician or chef. Counter-stereotype imaging involves detailed imagining of an abstract or real counter-stereotype. For instance, if an individual holds a stereotype that all Latinos are criminals, they could counter this stereotype by thinking about real people who are not criminals such as Latino judges, legislators, police officers, or teachers they may know or can imagine in the abstract.

The third strategy to counteract implicit bias is individuation, which is to obtain specific information about a group rather than to rely on group generalizations. An example of this strategy would be to counter the current stereotype of Muslims as terrorists by learning about Islam through listening sessions or trainings. The fourth strategy is perspective taking, which involves the individual taking the perceived perspective of a member of a stereotyped group. For example, what might it feel like and how might your behavior change if you were a Muslim woman wearing a hijab in a

predominantly non-Muslim space? How would her perspective be potentially different than your own?

The final strategy is to increase opportunities for positive interactions with members of stereotyped groups. This could include eating in restaurants that are owned and operated by people from cultures other than the individual's, reading books, attending lectures, and listening to music from cultures other than the individual's. This also includes meeting people, having conversations, and building relationships with people from cultures other than the individual's. Individuals at any level of intercultural competence can use each of these five strategies.

Devine, Forscher, Austin and Cox (2012) found that students who applied these strategies reduced their measures of implicit bias. Hines and Atherton (2015) found similar results as they led undergraduate students through a series of experiences and reflective discourse regarding race and culture.

These transformative learning experiences could be utilized as key components of transformative, critically reflective organizational learning. A review of literature regarding organizational culture, leadership, and culturally responsive leadership will inform the discussion of organizational learning through peer coaching.

Organizational Learning, Leadership, and Peer Coaching

The first two sections of this review have articulated that adults have lifetimes of experiences that shape their frames of reference, mind-sets, cultural values, and biases. Adult learning, through awareness, critical reflection, and discourse, has the potential to transform those biases, mind-sets, and actions if the adult sees the need and benefit of the

learning. So, how can leaders of school systems support teachers in transformative learning?

In the final section of this chapter, I will present a review of literature that discusses organizational culture and learning, and different models of leadership including culturally responsive and transformative leadership. To close the chapter, I will present a review of literature regarding peer coaching.

Organizational culture.

Knowles, Holton III, and Swanson (2014) write, "Every organization is also a social system that serves as an instrumentality for helping people meet human needs and achieve human goals" (p. 142). They further write, "No educational institution teaches just through its courses, workshops, and institutes; no corporation teaches just through its in-service education programs; and no voluntary organization teaches just through its meetings and study groups...they teach by everything they do" (p. 143). Schein (2010) describes this social system as organizational culture, which he defines as:

a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p. 18)

Schein (2010) describes how organizational culture can be observed at three levels: the artifacts of the organization (its visible structures, processes, and observed behaviors); the espoused beliefs and values of the organization; and the basic underlying assumptions of the organization, or unconscious beliefs and values that determine the behavior, perception, thought, and feeling of its members.

Schein (2010) writes that leaders embed culture in their organizations in six ways. These are (a) to what leaders systematically pay attention—what they measure, control, respond to, ignore, or place on agendas, (b) how they react to critical incidents, (c) how they allocate scarce resources, (d) explicit role modeling and mentoring, (e) how rewards and status are distributed, and (f) how members are recruited, selected, promoted, or isolated. In applying this model to education, to what do educational leaders pay attention? How are they reacting to the critical incidents of predictable achievement based upon race and poverty? How are leaders allocating resources to pedagogy, curriculum, or transformative learning in cultural responsiveness? How are educators and educational leaders hired, developed and promoted?

In their seminal piece, Firestone and Louis (1999) write that the adult culture within schools can be observed in how adults view students, how they view teaching, and how they view working together. If the prevailing assumption of the adult culture in a school views students as vessels to be filled with correct information found in books and who work in isolation, the culture may be seen as a closed community where tradition and individualism are emphasized. In contrast, a school whose adult culture views students as co-learners, where knowledge is continually growing, and where adults work collaboratively may be viewed as one that is open to change and critical reflection.

Louis and Lee (2016) investigated how the culture of a school impacts its capacity for organizational learning. Organizational learning in this context is viewed as a process of seeking new information, processing and evaluating it with others, using the new information, and generating new ideas as well as importing new ideas from the outside. Louis and Lee (2016) found that “school cultural components such as academic press,

student support, and trust and respect among teachers promote teachers' capacity for organizational learning" (p. 1). In addition, Louis & Lee (2016) found that the capacity for organizational learning increased when teachers' professional communities were characterized by reflective dialogue, de-privatized practice, and shared responsibility.

Thus, the greatest capacity for organizational learning and continuous improvement will be found in the school whose artifacts, espoused values, and hidden assumptions promote a professional culture of collaborative learning grounded in trust and respect, that features academic press and student support, and that engages in ongoing peer dialogues. It is the work of the leaders to shape those cultures at every level of the organization.

Leadership.

There are many models of leadership, and this literature review does not attempt to address all of those models. However, in schools there are specific practices that have led to effective school outcomes. Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) reviewed educational research and determined that "leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school" (p. 5). They determined that the core practices of successful leaders are "setting directions, developing people, and redesigning the organization" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 8). They also present several aspects of district-wide leadership that foster student learning. Three that are particularly pertinent to organizational learning are the "investment in instructional leadership development at the school and district levels," "district-wide job-embedded professional development focuses and supports for

teachers,” and “district-wide and school-level emphasis on teamwork and professional community” (Leithwood et al., 2004, pp. 43-44).

Heifetz (1994) reframes traditional leadership from being an “exercise of authority or influence” to being an activity of “mobilizing” groups of people. Heifetz (1994) suggests that all leadership could be viewed as adaptive work, which is “the learning required to address conflicts in the values people hold, or to diminish the gap between the values people stand for and the reality they face. Adaptive work requires a change in values, beliefs, or behavior” (p. 22). Firestone and Louis (1999) describe the work of transformational leaders as “creating a vision, setting high expectations for performance, creating consensus around group goals, and developing an intellectually stimulating climate” (p. 315).

To prepare for adaptive and transformational work, Argyris and Schön (1996) highlight the importance of reflection in all forms of leadership. They describe double loop learning as that which causes organizations or individuals within organizations to critically reflect upon the gap between their espoused theories and their actual theories in action, and whether there is a need to change one or both. To do so, they write, “Leaders must cultivate insight into their unconscious conflicts as well as into their conscious intentions” (p. 186). Similar to Larrivee (2000), Senge (2006) discusses the need to become aware of the mental models (implicit biases) through the skills of reflection and skills of inquiry. He writes,

Skills of reflection concern slowing down our thinking processes so that we can become more aware of how we form our mental models and the ways they influence our actions. Inquiry skills concern how we operate in face-to-face

interactions with others, especially in dealing with complex and conflictual issues.
(p. 175)

Reflection for leaders is key to guiding their organizations to achieve their intended goals.

In this brief overview of education leadership, it is clear that leaders set vision and create cultures where adults learn from and with each other. It is also clear that effective leadership engages in self-reflection, also a key component in transformative learning. Culturally responsive leadership and transformative leadership use the core education leadership practices of setting direction, developing people, and redesigning the organization (Leithwood et al., 2004) with the specific intention of creating more inclusive learning communities that can lead to increasing the academic attainment of African American, Latina/o/x, Native American, and some Asian students.

Culturally responsive and transformative leadership.

In the previous section, education leadership including adaptive leadership and transformational leadership were reviewed. Culturally responsive leadership and transformative leadership focus the leader's work to develop equitable learning environments for all students.

Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis (2016) describe four behaviors of culturally responsive school leaders. These are critical self-awareness, ensuring culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparation, developing culturally responsive and inclusive school environments, and engaging students and parents in community contexts. They write that, "unless promoted by the principal, implementation of cultural responsiveness can run the risk of being disjointed or short-lived in a school; and

conversely, district-level mandates are only effective to the extent they are locally enforced" (p. 3). These culturally responsive leadership behaviors are in addition to and interwoven with the leadership actions and behaviors described above such as setting the vision, developing people, and establishing a climate of professional learning built on trust and respect.

Shields (2010) describes transformative leadership as that which "begins by challenging inappropriate uses of power and privilege that create or perpetuate inequity and injustice" (p. 564). Shields (2013) describes eight tenets of transformative leadership theory as:

- the mandate to effect deep and equitable change;
- the need to deconstruct and reconstruct knowledge frameworks that perpetuate inequity and injustice;
- a focus on emancipation, democracy, equity, and justice;
- the need to address the inequitable distribution of power;
- an emphasis on both private and public (individual and collective) good;
- an emphasis on interdependence, interconnectedness, and global awareness;
- the call to exhibit moral courage. (p. 21)

To understand the difference between transformational leadership described in the previous section and transformative leadership, Hewitt, Davis, and Lashley (2014) write, "The transformational leader is reform-minded but not a revolutionary, whereas the transformative leader interrogates and seeks to disrupt that which is taken for granted" (p. 229).

Shields (2002) describes communities of difference that are created as a result of transformative leadership. She writes that four components for which leaders of communities of difference must strive are “developing respect, eliminating power inequities, embracing diverse perspectives, and establishing high expectations for all students” (p. 223). Eliminating power inequities and developing mutual respect challenges the status quo. Embracing diverse perspectives as equals challenges the status quo. These actions take transformative leaders who guide the development of cultural responsiveness throughout their organization or school.

Organizational learning.

Organizational learning occurs when all things the “organization systematically pays attention to” (Schein, 2010) are aligned. Transformative learning, the practice of self-awareness, personal and dialogic reflection, and action based upon that reflection is essential to increasing the capacity for organizational learning. To be transformative, culturally responsive leaders, individuals must be critically self-reflective themselves and expect others to be reflective as well. They must recognize and strive to eliminate power inequities in curriculum, pedagogy, and relationships while engaging diverse perspectives within the community (Hewitt, Davis, & Lashley, 2014; Khalifa, Gooden & Davis, 2016; Shields, 2010).

To guide transformative learning, leaders look to the proven examples of education leadership and provide job-embedded learning at all levels of the organization (Leithwood et al., 2004), in supportive teams grounded in reflective dialogue, de-privatized practice, and shared responsibility (Louis & Lee, 2016). The synthesis of the literature suggests that, to transform an organization’s culture into one of cultural

responsiveness, acknowledgement of bias with an open mind-set followed by transformative self-reflection, dialogue, and mentoring within trusting relationships has to occur at every level. And this reflection is followed by action that creates a more inclusive, equitable environment for all. Otherwise, as Gooden and Dantley (2012) write, “Self-reflection without transformative action is useless” (p. 242).

To become culturally responsive, district and school leaders, teachers, and staff challenge themselves to be vigilant for bias, practice critical self-reflection, and develop their skills in cultural responsiveness. They broaden their pedagogical skills to engage all students and deepen their historical/political/social understanding to include the perspectives of non-dominant cultures. Finally, they deepen their relationships with parents and communities different from them while maintaining the vision and high expectations they hold.

Many schools engaged in developing cultural responsiveness host equity leadership teams and some form of professional learning or ongoing mentoring of teachers (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Palmer, 2013; Shields, 2002; Singleton & Linton, 2006). To maintain this focus, and to utilize andragogical principles and the transformative learning processes, peer coaching can provide the ongoing support necessary for success.

Peer coaching.

Two observable methods used to embed organizational culture are role modeling or mentoring and how an organization spends its scarce resources (Schein, 2010). Peer coaching is a form of mentoring that has been found to be very effective in schools.

Joyce and Showers (1980) describe the many forms and levels of professional training used within schools as lectures, discussions, modeling, practice within a simulated condition, post-observation feedback, and ongoing peer coaching. Peer coaching was found to be a highly effective form of professional development as reviewed by researchers in program improvement (Ackland, 1991; Cornett & Knight, 2009; Edwards & Newton, 1995; Huston & Weaver, 2007; Joyce & Showers, 1980; Woulfin, 2014). In schools, peer coaching is the process of colleagues observing one another or a teacher working with a coach to provide feedback on teacher planning, practice, student performance, relationships, and reflection. It is non-evaluative, based on trusting relationships between coach and teacher, focused on student learning, is context-based, and informed by critical reflection (Ackland, 1991; Cornett & Knight, 2009; Huston & Weaver, 2007; Knight et al., 2015; Wong & Nicotera, 2003; Woulfin, 2014).

There are three purposes for coaching. The first is technical and team coaching, which focuses on incorporating new curriculum or instruction techniques. The second is collegial and cognitive coaching, which seeks to "improve existing teacher practices by refining techniques, developing collegiality, increasing professional dialogue, and assisting teachers to reflect on their teaching" (Wong & Nicotera, 2003, p. 2). The third is challenge coaching, which identifies and treats a specific school-wide or grade-level problem (Ackland, 1991; Becker 1996; Wong & Nicotera, 2003).

Currently there are four prominent coaching models in education that have specific methods to their models. These are peer coaching, cognitive coaching, content area coaching, and instructional coaching. In peer coaching, teachers coach their colleagues in a peer-to-peer relationship using modeling, practice, feedback, and ongoing

coaching dialogues to introduce, implement and refine teachers' skills. Cognitive coaching "puts thinking at the heart of the coaching relationship" (Cornett & Knight, 2009, p. 193) to increase student achievement and teacher efficacy, satisfaction, collaboration, and support. Content coaching emphasizes lesson design in specific content areas to increase teacher capacity to develop deep, rich understanding of content and its delivery to students. Finally, instructional coaching is based on seven principles: equality of individuals, teacher choice in learning, validation of diverse perspectives, dialogue, reflection, praxis, and reciprocity. It is viewed as a partnership between coach and teacher, with learning being bidirectional between the two individuals (Cornett & Knight, 2009; Teemant, Wink & Tyra, 2011).

Cornett and Knight (2009) write, "There are many similarities between the various approaches to coaching including deep respect of the professionalism of teachers, a partnership orientation, focus on listening before talking, emphasis on dialogical conversation, and recognition of the primacy of students learning" (p. 193). The benefits include positive impact on teacher attitudes, increased implementation of new curriculum and/or skill transfer; increased feelings of teacher efficacy; and improved student achievement (Cornett & Knight, 2009; Joyce & Showers, 1980; Knight, 2009; Teemant, Wink & Tyra, 2010). For the purposes of this paper, I will use the term peer coaching since it is situated in peer-to-peer relationships no matter the purpose or model.

Huston and Weaver (2007) found that the most successful peer coaching programs involve goal-setting that emanates from the teacher, voluntary participation, confidentiality, formative evaluation of the coaching program while maintaining confidentiality, and organizational support in the form of funding, clarity of purpose,

publicizing the program, and honoring the coaches. Many of these tenets are similar to the assumptions of andragogy.

Peer coaching to develop teachers' skills and content knowledge for literacy, math, or technology instruction has been found to be a highly effective form of professional development. The question of this study is whether similar effects might be found for peer equity coaching. Research does not exist on this type of coaching program. Palmer (2013) investigated the impact of professional development to talk about race and the principal's role in supporting the learning. Results confirmed changes in teachers' openness to discussing race, in naming White privilege, and in changing pedagogical and curricular choices when ongoing professional learning was provided, especially when supported by their building principals (Palmer, 2013).

The question for education leaders and the focus of this paper is, how might teachers, administrators, and an education organization benefit from a peer equity coaching program staffed by coaches who are critically self-reflective, have open mind-sets, and who are themselves culturally responsive teachers? Would they be able to assist leaders in shifting their organizational cultures to one that Louis and Lee (2016) describe as those that demonstrate trust and respect, focus on academic press, that provide academic support, and that learn collectively through reflective dialogue and de-privatized practice? Would individual teachers experience transformative learning by reflecting upon disorienting dilemmas through discourse with a trusted colleague?

As described earlier, developing cultural responsiveness in classrooms requires sustained critical reflection upon deeply held beliefs and assumptions along with critical assessment of pedagogy and curriculum within current social contexts. It cannot be

attained in one annual workshop. To make equity a reality and not an espoused theory, daily practice through reflection and discourse may be necessary to transform the organizational culture of schools. It is possible that peer to peer coaching could be the process by which transformative teachers and leaders shift the tide away from the predictable low attainment and over-representation of suspensions for students of color and Native American students in today's schools.

Summary

The first section of this chapter presented a review of literature regarding implicit bias, mental models, and mind-sets present in daily experiences. Most often, individuals are unaware of biases until some disorienting dilemma brings them forward to the conscious mind. I presented literature that demonstrated how growth mind-sets, growth in intercultural competence, and the development of cultural responsiveness could assist individuals in becoming aware of those biases and transform their awareness into action to unlearn those biases and stereotypes.

The second body of literature focused on adult learning theory, transformative adult learning, and critical reflection. In this review, I presented the basic assumptions of andragogy required for adults to engage in new learning. I provided a brief description of the need for social, physical, and emotional safety in order for the brain to engage in cognitive function which is necessary in learning new information, skills, or behaviors. I also described the process of transformative learning occurring through self-reflection and critical discourse after a disorienting experience. Lastly, I discussed the importance of critical self-reflection in developing cultural responsiveness.

In the final section, I reviewed the literature regarding school and organizational culture, described the actions and behaviors of leaders, and how those are amplified when becoming culturally responsive and transformative leaders. I then identified peer coaching as a highly successful form of professional development, and suggested that, situated within supporting organizational cultures and structures led by culturally responsive leaders, transformative learning through peer coaching may create the organizational shift required to increase student achievement for African American, Latino/a/x, some Asian and Native American students. When viewed as separate bodies of literature, each provides deep content knowledge of each topic.

In this qualitative, constructivist, grounded theory model of inquiry, the synthesis of these bodies of literature will inform the research investigating the impact of peer equity coaching upon individuals and the organization as well as the leadership needed to support and sustain the program. The next chapter will describe the methodology used to conduct the research.

Chapter 3

Study Design

“The invisibility of inequality to those with privilege does not give way easily to entreaties to see what is going on. The intimate entwining of privilege with gendered and racialized identity makes privilege particularly difficult to unsettle.”
(Joan Acker, 2006, p. 457)

Equity coaching is the model of peer feedback utilized by one suburban school district as part of its incentive program for teacher development. The purpose of this study was to investigate the nature of the peer equity coaching program in this school district. In particular, my research investigated (a) whether transformative learning occurred that led to deeper cultural responsiveness of teachers and administrators; (b) what leadership characteristics, behaviors, and actions contributed to the success of peer equity coaching; and (c) what organizational learning or systemic change was influenced by the peer equity coaching program.

In this chapter, I will present the research design and methodology utilized in this study and the rationale for its selection. I will then present the setting of the study with a general description of the school district and the story of the development of the peer equity coaching program. This will be followed by a description of the data sample, data collection and data analysis methods. To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, I will present the researcher’s positionality and discuss the study’s limitations in the final section of the chapter.

Qualitative Inquiry

This study is a qualitative case study within a constructivist paradigm. Toma (2011) discusses paradigmatic approaches to qualitative research. He states that critical

theorists base their research in historical realism “as action toward empowerment and emancipation—toward more equity and justice” where “reality is shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values” (p. 267). He further writes, “Constructivists and participatory researchers also focus on action, but more in terms of inquiry being incomplete without the research prompting improvement” (p. 267). In this study, I seek to construct meaning from the current context and to contribute to a deeper understanding for other school districts, researchers, and policy-makers about peer equity coaching as a model to develop cultural responsiveness within any organization or school.

Qualitative inquiry seeks to understand the question of “how” something is occurring. It tells the story of that which is being studied rather than quantitatively reporting the results of a specific response to a specific stimulus (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Phillips, 2011; Toma, 2011). Toma (2011) describes qualitative research in four ways. First, it is holistic in that it focuses on process and content, not only outcome. Second, it is empirical in that qualitative research takes place in a natural setting such as observations and interviews in the field. Qualitative research is interpretive because it looks to gain meaning based upon the researcher’s interpretation of the data collected and grounded in the literature review. Finally, Toma (2011) describes qualitative research as empathetic in that it acknowledges the “frames of reference and values of those involved” (p. 265).

In qualitative study the researcher generates interesting questions, grounds those questions in prior research, establishes a plan for data collection, and then seeks understanding through thorough analysis of the data collected and its connection to the

guiding literature. Qualitative inquiry involves observing in a natural setting real-world experiences, interactions, and environments. The qualitative researcher draws generalizations from the data, poses a theory for understanding, and constructs meaning from the story collected. This study is set in a functioning school district, is informed by the work of previous scholars, and is guided by interesting questions with a plan for data collection and analysis. Therefore, this study is clearly set within the qualitative research paradigm.

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe three approaches to analyzing qualitative data. These are interpretivism, social anthropology, and collaborative social research, also referred to as action research. Researchers using interpretivism seek to interpret human discourse and action, often viewing themselves as an essential participant in the study. Social anthropologists, according to Miles and Huberman (1994), most often use ethnography as a methodology to observe and describe a particular community. Collaborative social research takes place in a social setting. Two methods within collaborative social research are critical ethnography and action science, which “seek to transform the social environment through a process of critical inquiry—to act on the world rather than being acted on” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 9). Both of these action-related methods emphasize, “intellectual 'emancipation' through unpacking taken-for-granted views and detecting invisible but oppressive structures” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 9).

Toma (2011) describes five approaches to qualitative research, including biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case studies. He describes each in the following ways. Biographies investigate the life of an individual

and phenomenology seeks to understand the experiences surrounding a particular event. Those using grounded theory analyze the data collected to find categories of information that may lead to a theory of explanation regarding the topic or case being studied. Glaser (1967) describes the constant comparative method within grounded theory to develop these categories by continuously coding the data in order to inform the ongoing research.

Toma (2011) describes ethnographers as researchers who seek to “describe and interpret the behavior of a community” (p. 266). Finally, researchers using case study analysis observe and analyze a single case within a specific time frame. Case studies provide the framework for collecting data in a holistic, real-world setting and are used to understand complex social contexts (Toma, 2011; Yin, 2013). They are the “preferred method for studying interventions or innovations” (Toma, 2011, p. 266).

In reviewing these limited sources, it is clear that there are multiple ways of describing and using qualitative research. Because this study seeks to understand and describe one program in one district, it is a case study. Because the questions of the study are situated within a social environment and seek to discover transformative properties, it is collaborative social research. Because the data were analyzed to reveal key themes and conclusions that triggered additional questions, findings, and conclusions, the methods used were grounded theory and constant comparison. In the next section, I will present the context of the school district in which this research occurred.

The Setting

Johnson Public Schools (a pseudonym) is a mid-sized suburban school district of a large metropolitan area in the Midwestern United States of America. In 2016, its

student population was 4,727 students. Of those students, fifty-eight percent identified on the student census as White, twenty-four percent as Black, eleven percent as Hispanic, six percent as Asian/Pacific Islander, and one percent as Native American. Its student population has grown more diverse over time, expanding from thirty-two percent of the student population in 2006 to thirty-eight percent in 2011 to forty-two percent in 2016. The district has six schools. Of these, there are four elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school.

Johnson Public Schools has a history of developing innovative programs and interventions to support their students' success. In 1999, after reviewing the data and observing yet another frustrating number of ninth-grade course failures, one creative ninth-grade school counselor, with the support of her principal and key teacher-leaders, developed a school-wide intervention program for every ninth-grade student. Teachers were organized into teams who shared the same 100-120 students in core subjects. These teacher teams met weekly to discuss individual student's strengths, struggles, and coping strategies throughout the year. Not only did these teams look at academic performance, but they also learned about students' social, emotional, and personal needs beyond the school hours. The guidance counselor engaged community health and support organizations to assist with student needs when referrals seemed necessary.

The result of this ninth-grade intervention was a dramatic reduction in failed classes, increased student academic performance, and the closure of the persistent high school graduation gap between White students and students of color and Native American students. The district is now offering this model to other school districts around the nation with the support of federal funding. This story is noted because the

peer equity coaching program also grew from innovative teachers at the high school in this district.

History and Development of Equity Coaching

In 2005, the state legislature enacted the Quality Compensation law (Q Comp) that allowed school districts and their collective bargaining groups (teacher unions) to negotiate an alternative teacher professional pay system (ATPPS). The system includes career ladder/advancement options, job-embedded professional development, teacher evaluation, performance pay, and an alternative salary schedule (Larson, 2015). Johnson Public Schools adopted this model in 2005 and, as part of the teacher evaluation and embedded professional development process, teachers could receive additional alternative pay if they met with Building Instructional Leaders (BILs) three times annually in a peer review process.

BILs were full-time teachers who earned stipends to conduct peer observations and feedback sessions during their preparation periods. BILs focused their feedback around classroom pedagogy and curriculum, exchanging ideas of how to present the curriculum at hand. A standard peer feedback form was used by all BILs, which had been adopted in an agreement between the teachers' union and school district administration. When teachers demonstrated proficiency through the three observation and feedback sessions with a BIL, they received the additional pay as negotiated in the ATPPS model.

During the 2012-2013 school year, a group of teachers at Johnson High School who were frustrated with the constant and predictable attainment gap between students of color, Native American, and White students proposed an alternative to the ATPPS model of peer-to-peer teacher feedback. This group proposed that the focus of peer observation

and feedback include the development of the racial consciousness of teachers in order to build relationships with students of color and to develop culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum. A new type of coaching was designed and proposed with the new title “equity coach”.

Because funding for BILs and for equity coaches was allocated through the ATPPS model of Q Comp, the teachers’ union had to vote to approve the model. The school and district administration also had to approve it. The model, with two full-time teachers serving as equity coaches, increased the cost of peer-to-peer evaluations. To offset the additional expense, teachers at the high school were asked to decrease their own alternative additional pay by \$500 each. Teachers at the high school voted to approve the new model with eighty-four percent voting in favor of offering equity coaching to those who wanted to participate (EC8).

After the high school teachers voted in favor of the model, the teachers’ union and the superintendent requested and were granted a variance from the governing state education agency to pilot equity coaching in Johnson Public Schools during the 2013-2014 school year. A team of teachers and administrators worked together with consultant Jamie Almanzán to develop the equity coaching process.

The initial plan for equity coaching included two full-time teachers who were not also teaching, but were full-time equity coaches. Equity coaches would complete the three required peer observations and feedback sessions using equity as the lens through which the observations and feedback were given. Equity, as created through cultural self-awareness, culturally responsive pedagogy, and rigorous and relevant curriculum,

was not yet embedded as a component of the feedback rubric itself, but was viewed as the framework of the coaching sessions.

The job requirements of the equity coaches were more extensive than solely completing teacher observations. Equity coaches also modeled culturally responsive lessons, served as substitutes so their teachers could observe a colleague, provided professional learning such as book clubs and discussions for small groups, and led trainings for the entire staff. They also met with building administrators to discuss themes and general observations of what questions, actions, and responses they noticed in their work regarding teachers' understanding of race and culture in their classrooms.

In the first year, only high school teachers could opt between a building instruction leader (BIL) or an equity coach. One district leader stated that, in the first year, they could see this was professional development that “got to the hearts and minds of teachers, not just their anticipatory set” (A3). During the 2014-2015 school year, more teachers across the district chose to participate in peer equity coaching and one additional peer equity coach was hired. Equity coaching continued to expand across the district and another three peer coaches were hired during the 2015-2016 school year, bringing the total to six equity coaches.

Then, in 2016, the governing state education agency informed Johnson Public Schools that they needed to make a district-wide decision regarding their pilot equity coaching program. Another vote was held by the teachers' union to either return to the previous model of BILs feedback or to transition to equity coaching district-wide in the fall of 2016. Equity coaching was narrowly approved as the district-wide model for peer-to-peer teacher evaluation situated within the ATPPS framework. During the 2016-2017

school year, the year of this study, nine peer equity coaches served the entire district to provide coaching through a lens of equity to all licensed teachers in Johnson Public Schools. In addition to these nine coaches, equity observers were trained to complete the second of the three teacher observations. Equity observers were, in essence, BILs who had demonstrated capacity in culturally responsive teaching.

Participant Selection

Peer equity coaching involved three separate groups of educators within Johnson Public Schools—the teachers, the equity coaches, and the building and district administrators. To gather the broadest understanding of the nature of the peer equity coaching program and its impact on organizational learning, I interviewed a representative sample of the teaching staff, most of the equity coaches and most of the building and district administrators with instructional influence. A description of the research sample is described in the next section.

The teachers.

For this research study, I created a representative sample of tenured teachers based upon their gender, race, grade level and subject area (required or elective), and longevity in the school district. Probationary teachers were not included due to their limited experience in the district and to respect their efforts at achieving tenure. Each of the identifying characteristics will be described below.

During the 2016-2017 school year, Johnson Public School employed four hundred one teachers across the district. Of those teachers, two hundred forty were tenured and worked in the elementary or secondary schools. For this study, eleven tenured secondary teachers and nine tenured elementary teachers were interviewed. Five teachers were

from the high school, six teachers were from the middle school, and the nine elementary teachers represented the four elementary schools.

As described earlier, peer equity coaching began at the high school during the 2013-2014 school year as a pilot program that operated alongside the BILs model of peer observations and feedback. Peer equity coaching was offered to elementary teachers in the second and third years, and then required of all teachers during the 2016-2017 school year. Therefore, teachers interviewed for this study had varied lengths of time working with peer equity coaches. Those who were in their first year with an equity coach were required to have an equity coach since it was adopted as the requisite model of peer feedback for teachers.

In this study sample, two of the tenured secondary teachers were in their fourth year with an equity coach, two were in their third year, four were in their second year, and three were in their first year. Three of the tenured elementary teachers were in their third year working with an equity coach, two were in their second year, and four were in their first year as shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Number of Years Coached by a Peer Equity Coach in Study Sample

| | One Year | Two Years | Three Years | Four Years |
|----------------------------|----------|-----------|-------------|------------|
| Tenured Elementary Teacher | 4 | 2 | 3 | 0 |
| Tenured Secondary Teacher | 3 | 4 | 2 | 2 |

The majority of teachers in Johnson Public Schools identify as female as shown in Table 6. Overall, seventy-nine percent of the district’s teachers identified as female and twenty-one percent as male. Of the tenured teachers, eighty-nine percent of elementary

and sixty-eight percent of secondary teachers identified as female. Eleven percent of tenured elementary teachers and thirty-two percent of tenured secondary teachers identified as male. In this study sample, fifty-five percent of the tenured secondary teachers and seventy-eight percent of the tenured elementary teachers interviewed identified as female.

Table 6
2016-2017 Total Number of Teachers and Gender

| | Total Number | Percentage of Total | Number Male | Percentage Male | Number Female | Percentage Female |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|----------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| All Teachers | 401 | 100% | 85 | 21% | 316 | 79% |
| Secondary Teachers | 165 | 41% | 50 | 30% | 115 | 70% |
| Tenured Secondary Teachers | 117 | 28% | 38 | 32% | 79 | 68% |
| Tenured Secondary Teacher Sample | 11 | 2.7% | 5 | 45% | 6 | 55% |
| Elementary Teachers | 168 | 42% | 23 | 14% | 145 | 86% |
| Tenured Elementary Teachers | 123 | 31% | 14 | 11% | 110 | 89% |
| Tenured Elementary Teacher Sample | 9 | 2.2% | 2 | 22% | 7 | 78% |

During the 2016-2017 school year, the racial profile of all teachers in Johnson Public Schools was ninety percent White and ten percent teachers of color as shown in Table 7. Of the tenured secondary teachers, ninety-four percent identified as White, one-half percent as American Indian, one-half percent as Asian, five percent as Hispanic, four percent Black, one-quarter percent as two-or-more races, and one-quarter percent did not identify a race. (These are the racial labels used by the district). Of the tenured

elementary teachers, eighty-seven percent identified as White, eight-tenths percent as American Indian, none as Asian, nine percent as Hispanic, and three percent as Black.

Table 7

2016-2017 Racial Identity of Teachers and Grade (Gr) Levels Taught

| | American Indian (AI) Percentage AI | | Asian Percentage Asian | | Hispanic Percentage Hispanic | | Black Percentage Black | | White Percentage White | | Two or More Races Percentage Two or More | | Total Teachers of Color | Percentage Teachers of Color |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----|---------------------------|-----|---------------------------------|------|---------------------------|------|---------------------------|-----|---|------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| All Teachers | 2 | .5% | 2 | .5% | 20 | 5% | 15 | 4% | 360 | 90% | 1 | .25% | 40 | 10% |
| Gr. 6-12 Teachers | 1 | .6% | 1 | .6% | 4 | 2% | 4 | 2% | 154 | 93% | 1 | .6% | 12 | 7% |
| Tenured Gr. 6-12 Teachers | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0% | 3 | 2.6% | 2 | 1.7% | 110 | 94% | 0 | 0% | 7 | 6% |
| Gr. K-5 Teachers | 2 | 1% | 1 | .6% | 14 | 8% | 7 | 4% | 144 | 86% | 0 | 0% | 24 | 14% |
| Tenured Gr. K-5 Teachers | 1 | .8% | 0 | 0% | 11 | 9% | 4 | 3% | 108 | 87% | 0 | 0% | 16 | 13% |
| Sample Tenured Teachers | | | | | | | | | 14 | 70% | | | 6 | 30% |

In this study sample, seventy-three percent of tenured secondary teachers and sixty-seven percent of tenured elementary teachers identified as White. Because of the small numbers of teachers of color and Native American teachers interviewed, I have grouped them together as teachers of color rather than disaggregated by race to maintain

their confidentiality. Of the tenured teachers interviewed for this study, thirty percent of the tenured teachers identified as teachers of color.

Teacher longevity in the district was the final variable in creating a random representative sample of teachers as shown in Table 8. In the district overall, twenty-seven percent of teachers were in their first three years of teaching; twenty-eight percent

Table 8

2016-2017 Teacher Longevity in Johnson Public Schools

| | Total Number | Probationary (1-3 Years) | Percentage Probationary | 4-10 Years | Percentage 4-10 Years | 11-20 Years | Percentage 11-20 Years | 21-30 Years | Percentage 21-30 Years | 31-45 Years | Percentage 31-45 Years |
|-----------------------------------|--------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|------------|-----------------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------|------------------------|-------------|------------------------|
| All Teachers | 401 | 108 | 27% | 111 | 28% | 116 | 29% | 62 | 15% | 4 | 1% |
| Secondary Teachers | 165 | 48 | 29% | 39 | 24% | 44 | 27% | 34 | 21% | 0 | 0% |
| Tenured Secondary Teachers | 117 | NA | NA | 39 | 33% | 44 | 38% | 34 | 29% | 0 | 0% |
| Tenured Secondary Teacher Sample | 11 | NA | NA | 5 | 45% | 4 | 36% | 2 | 18% | 0 | 0% |
| Elementary Teachers | 168 | 45 | 27% | 45 | 27% | 52 | 31% | 21 | 14% | 2 | 1% |
| Tenured Elementary Teachers | 123 | NA | NA | 45 | 37% | 52 | 42% | 24 | 20% | 2 | 2% |
| Tenured Elementary Teacher Sample | 9 | NA | NA | 5 | 56% | 2 | 22% | 2 | 22% | 1 | 11% |

were in their first through thirtieth year of teaching; and one percent were in their thirty-first through forty-fifth year of teaching. In the sample interviewed, forty-five percent of

secondary teachers and fifty-six percent of elementary teachers were in their fourth through tenth years. Thirty-six percent of secondary and twenty-two percent of elementary teachers were in their eleventh through twentieth years. Eighteen percent of secondary and twenty-two percent of elementary teachers were in their twenty-first through thirtieth years, and eleven percent (one individual) were in their thirty-first through forty-fifth year teaching in Johnson Public Schools.

The equity coaches.

During the 2016-2017 school year, Johnson Public Schools employed nine equity coaches to provide equity coaching to all licensed teachers across the district. All equity coaches were invited to participate in this study. Seven of the nine agreed to be interviewed. One of the two founding equity coaches had taken a new job in another district that year. Because of this equity coach's knowledge of the origin and development of the program and relatively recent departure, this equity coach was also interviewed. To protect this coach's confidentiality, their information and responses are included as a member of the equity coaching team.

The ten (nine current plus one former) equity coaches are a diverse team. Three of the equity coaches are male and seven are female as shown in Table 9. Five of the coaches are White, four of the coaches are Black, and one is Latina as shown in Table 10. Five are in their first three years with the district; four have worked there between four and ten years; and one has worked there between eleven and twenty years as shown in Table 11.

The administrators.

The third group of individuals interviewed for this study was the administrative team. Seven of eight school administrators and four district administrators participated in

Table 9

2016-2017 Total Number and Percentages of Equity Coaches and Administrators by Gender

| | Total Number | Percentage of Total | Total Male | Percentage Male | Total Female | Percentage Female |
|---|--------------|---------------------|------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Total Equity Coaches | 10 | 100% | 3 | 30% | 7 | 70% |
| Equity Coaches Sample | 8 | 75% | 2 | 25% | 6 | 75% |
| Building Principals and Assistant Principals | 8 | 100% | 6 | 75% | 2 | 25% |
| Building Principals and Assistant Principals Sample | 7 | 88% | 5 | 71% | 2 | 29% |
| District Administrators | 10 | 100% | 3 | 30% | 7 | 70% |
| District Administrators Sample | 4 | 40% | 1 | 25% | 3 | 75% |

the study. District administrators were selected because they are involved in the design and review of the peer equity-coaching program. These are the superintendent, the principal on special assignment directing the program, the director of teaching and learning, and the director of evaluation.

During the 2016-2017 school year, seventy-five percent of building administrators identified as male and seventy-one percent of building administrators sample identified as male as shown in Table 9. Thirty percent of the district administrators identified as male, and twenty-five percent of the sample identified as male.

Racially, all building administrators in Johnson Public Schools were White during the 2016-2017 school year. Eighty percent of district administrators identified as White, ten percent as Black and ten percent as Asian. Of the sample interviewed, fifty percent of district administrators identified as White, twenty-five percent as Black and twenty-five percent as Asian as shown in Table 10.

Table 10

2016-2017 Racial Identity of Equity Coaches and Administrators

| | Number | Asian | Percentage Asian | Hispanic | Percentage Hispanic | Black | Percentage Black | White | Percentage White |
|---|--------|-------|------------------|----------|---------------------|-------|------------------|-------|------------------|
| Total Equity Coaches | 10 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 10% | 4 | 40% | 5 | 50% |
| Sample Equity Coaches | 8 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 12.5% | 2 | 25% | 5 | 62.5% |
| Total Building Principals and Assistant Principals | 8 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 8 | 100% |
| Sample Building Principals and Assistant Principals | 7 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 7 | 100% |
| Total District Administrators | 10 | 1 | 10% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 10% | 8 | 80% |
| Sample District Administrators | 4 | 1 | 25% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 25% | 2 | 50% |

In reviewing the longevity of administrators in the district, fifty percent of building administrators were in the district between eleven and twenty years, thirty-eight percent between twenty-one and thirty years, and twelve percent thirty-one to forty-five years. Of the sample interviewed, forty-three percent were in the district eleven to twenty years, forty-three percent between twenty-one and thirty years, and fourteen percent between thirty-one and forty-five years as shown in Table 11.

Table 11

2016-2017 Longevity of Equity Coaches and Administrators

| | Total Number | Probationary (1-3 Years) Percentage Probationary | | Total 4-10 Years Percentage 4-10 Years | | Total 11-20 Years Percentage 11-20 Years | | Total 21-30 Years Percentage 21-30 Years | | Total 31-45 Years Percentage 31-45 Years | |
|---|--------------|---|-----|---|-------|---|-------|---|-----|---|-----|
| Total Equity Coaches | 10 | 5 | 50% | 4 | 40% | 1 | 10% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Sample Equity Coaches | 8 | 4 | 50% | 3 | 37.5% | 1 | 12.5% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Total Building Principals and Assistant Principals | 8 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 4 | 50% | 3 | 38% | 1 | 12% |
| Sample Building Principals and Assistant Principals | 7 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 3 | 43% | 3 | 43% | 1 | 14% |
| Total District Administrators | 10 | 1 | 10% | 4 | 40% | 3 | 30% | 2 | 20% | 0 | 0% |
| Sample District Administrators | 4 | 0 | 0% | 1 | 25% | 3 | 75% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |

District administrators had less longevity overall than the building administrators as shown in Table 11. Ten percent of district administrators were in their first through third year, forty percent were in their fourth through tenth year, thirty percent were in their eleventh through twentieth year, and twenty percent were in their twenty-first through thirtieth year. In the sample of district administrators interviewed, twenty-five percent were in their fourth through tenth year, and seventy-five percent were in their eleventh through twentieth years.

Participants were selected after I reviewed the teacher, equity coach and administrator profiles as described above. Once selected, each potential participant was invited to participate via email. Each email described the nature of the project and acknowledged the support of the superintendent, the director of assessment, and the school principals. All interviews were voluntary in nature. If a teacher declined, no further requests were initiated, and a teacher representing a similar profile was invited.

In an effort to maintain confidentiality of each participant, no identifying information is published in this study. Consent forms were reviewed and signed by each participant and the researcher. Additionally, all conventions of research ethics were upheld, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the study was obtained prior to the investigation.

Data Collection and Analysis

In qualitative case studies, researchers collect and use multiple sources of data such as documents, interviews, observations, and artifacts to describe the case, analyze the data for themes or categories that emerge, and eventually draw conclusions from the

analysis (Toma, 2011). For this study, the primary sources of data were the thirty-nine interviews conducted by the researcher. Each interview was approximately one hour in length.

Other data collected and analyzed were artifacts describing peer equity coaching including the job description, feedback forms, and district descriptions of the equity coaching program published on the district's website. Additionally, the district's mission, vision, and strategic plan were included in the data collected and analyzed.

The constant comparative method of grounded theory inquiry was used to analyze the data in this study. A qualitative analysis software program was employed to sort my data. The first step was to code the data from the interviews with equity coaches, looking for emergent themes. The complete data set was reviewed twice more, constantly comparing any additional coding added in the second and third reviews to those developed in the first review. The codes with accompanying data were then compressed into categories, further identifying fourteen general themes with thirty-one supporting categories. The key findings from the data of the equity coaches were then drafted into the narrative found in Chapter 4.

This same process was used to code and analyze data from teacher interviews, sorting the codes into nine general themes with thirty-six supporting categories. The findings from the teacher interviews are provided in Chapter 5. Lastly, the data from the administrator interviews were coded and analyzed using the same constant comparative method. These codes were sorted into twenty-five general themes, with seven supporting categories. Findings from the administrator interviews are found in Chapter 6. To check

for accuracy and to remain sensitive to the participants, initial theories and reporting were verified with the participants prior to publication.

The final step in the data analysis was to synthesize the findings from the three groups into one set of key conclusions. To do this, the findings from each collective sample were compared, looking to internally validate the findings across the three groups. These findings are found in Chapter 7.

Methodological Integrity

Several authors have discussed standards for the quality of conclusions in qualitative study and refer to these as the trustworthiness of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Toma, 2011). Toma (2011) concluded that validity, reliability, generalizability, and objectivity were the four standards upon which most researchers agree. Miles and Huberman (1994) add utilization or applicability to this list. The attention to each of these standards and my demonstration of trustworthiness is described below.

This study demonstrates internal validity by drawing conclusions from the data and triangulating those conclusions across the three sets of data sources along with additional written materials. It demonstrates reliability by providing a clear description of the methods of inquiry and analysis, including interview questions that could be replicated by other researchers in other settings. It demonstrates generalizability to the extent that, if another district has a similar equity coaching program, the roles and demographics of the participants have been described with enough detail for future researchers to replicate the study at another setting. This study demonstrates objectivity as the data were explicitly coded, conclusions were drawn from the data and not from the

researcher's bias, and by considering alternative conclusions. Potential researcher bias will be addressed in the next section of this chapter. Lastly, this study demonstrates utilization by being situated in a working school district in a state struggling with attainment gaps between students of color, Native American students, and White students, in a nation that continues to struggle with racism and oppression. It is hoped that this study contributes to future research and generates potential policy questions regarding teacher and administrator development of culturally responsive teaching and leading.

Researcher Positionality

While every researcher attempts to be impartial, researcher bias exists. Much like implicit bias described in Chapter 2, researcher bias is influenced by all the previous personal and professional experiences, trainings, and education the researcher has acquired. Researcher bias is also influenced by the researcher's race, culture, gender, economic status, and any social group to which the researcher belongs. It takes conscious, continuous effort to ascertain that the findings presented come from the data, and not from the researcher's bias. This is why the previously described steps to establish the trustworthiness of the study were taken. To provide the reader with an understanding of my positionality, I will take a moment to describe important components of my personal and professional story.

I am a White, lesbian woman who grew up on a farm in southeastern Minnesota, the thirteenth of fourteen children. Being one of the youngest allowed me to witness my older siblings' struggles as their adult choices didn't always align with my parents' values. In 1969, one of my older brothers married a Lutheran, which was against my

parents' understanding of what was allowed within their Catholic faith. They believed my brother would go to hell. A few years later, another brother and his girlfriend were expecting a baby. They got married, had a second child, and then divorced. My parents believed they had lost a second son to hell as divorce was counter to their Catholic teachings. As a child, I saw my mother cry, and worry, and pray that her sons would make different choices.

In about 1978, my eldest brother was a year away from being ordained a priest. He came out as a gay man to my parents who again struggled to comprehend. What had they done to fail their children? This was the question my mom and dad asked a priest. His response changed our world. This priest said, "It is not your job to judge. It is your job to love your children." My parents, family farmers with eighth-grade and high school educations, transformed their belief system to make room for their children's values and choices. Because they were willing to have very difficult conversations, and were willing to reflect on the nature of their deeply held values, they transformed their relationships, and so did we. So, when I came out to my parents when I was in college, I did not have the struggle my elder siblings had.

The experience of witnessing my parents reflect, discuss, and transform their relationships with me and my siblings was an example of transformative adult learning. I see this today, but did not have words for this as a teenager. I felt the positivity that flooded our home after that dialogue about love occurred. Reflecting upon those experiences now, I see how their willingness to engage in dialogue shaped my understanding of how differences could peacefully coexist within our family.

Professionally, I have been a public educator for thirty years. I was a music teacher for grades kindergarten through twelve, an assistant principal, and finally a school principal for ten years at the elementary and middle school levels. My first seven years of teaching were in rural Minnesota, followed by seven years in Minneapolis Public Schools, three years in an integration district, and eight years in a first-ring suburb with a diverse student population of seventy-eight percent of students living in poverty and approximately seventy percent students of color.

As an educator, there have been several moments of significant, sometimes transformative, learning that came after I experienced disorienting dilemmas. One of those experiences occurred while supervising the lunchroom at the middle school where I was the building principal. I was walking among the tables, visiting with students along the way. I stopped by a table where five or six seventh-grade girls were seated. An African American girl named Evelyn looked up at me and said, “Ms. Bussman, why do you always *ask* the White kids to do things and you *tell* the Black kids?” I said, “I didn’t realize that I was doing that. Do I do that all the time?” She replied, “Well, that’s what I see.” And I said to her “Thank you, Evelyn. I will be more aware of that from here on out. Thank you.”

I had many, many ways to respond in that moment. I could have downplayed her observation, telling her she was wrong. I could have told her that she was close to being insubordinate. I could have made excuses for my behavior, saying I didn’t do that all the time. In that moment, I chose to say thank you and pledged to be more aware of my words and my tone in the future. At the time, I did not have words for implicit bias. But, I knew Evelyn saw something that I could not see on my own. And I knew that I wanted

to use that insight to build stronger relationships with students and families who were not White, educated, and middle-class like me.

As an educator, I believe in the power of opportunity, in discovery, and in working together to achieve great things. As a farmer's daughter, I learned that collaborative hard work was necessary to get the job done. As a music educator and choir teacher, I learned that harmony was created by all voices working together to create one product. As a school principal, my daily effort was to listen to the many voices, to try to build common understanding while honoring individual voices.

As a building principal, I tried to guide my staff to see interactions from the student's perspective. I became frustrated because my positional power created a barrier to dialogue. I wondered how teachers who effectively built positive relationships with high expectations and academic success could share their wisdom with other teachers. It was this curiosity that eventually led me to Johnson Public Schools and to develop this study.

The result I have been seeking is a model that develops cultural responsiveness in teachers and administrators. Because of this bias, it was vital for me to return to the data to confirm that my conclusions came from what teachers, equity coaches, and administrators said and not what I wanted to hear.

Interview Questions

The data gathered from the interviews emanated from the questions I used to guide each conversational interview. Interviews with all participants followed a similar protocol. I emailed the questions to the participants one to two days prior to the meeting.

All participants were asked the following sets of questions, and additional questions as the conversation revealed new insights.

Questions for teachers.

1. Please tell me briefly about your current teaching assignment and your experience in this district.
2. What do you love about teaching?
3. What do you find most challenging?
4. How long have you had an equity coach?
5. Has having had an equity coach impacted your teaching? If so, could you share some examples of that impact or change? If not, why might that be?
6. Do you have any hopes for the future of equity coaching in Johnson Public Schools or beyond?
7. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Questions for equity coaches.

1. Could you tell me briefly about your current role and how you came to this role as an equity coach?
2. Why did you want to become an equity coach?
3. How did you prepare to become an equity coach? What training or experience prepared you for the role?
4. What do you love about being an equity coach?
5. What is difficult about being an equity coach?
6. What are your dreams for the equity coaching program?

7. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Questions for principals.

1. What is your role? Could you briefly describe your professional pathway to this role?
2. What do you love about being a building principal?
3. What's difficult about being a building administrator?
4. From your perspective, what's the climate of the building this year, and has there been any shift in this climate over the years?
5. Have you participated in equity coaching as an administrator? If so, how has the coaching impacted your leadership?
6. From your perspective, has equity coaching had an impact on the climate of the school or district? If so, could you describe?
7. What are your dreams for the equity-coaching program?
8. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Questions for district administrators.

1. What is your role? Could you briefly describe your professional pathway to this role?
2. What do you love about being in your role?
3. What is challenging?
4. Has equity-coaching had an impact on the climate of each building or the district in general? If so, could you describe the impact?

5. What are your hopes and dreams for the equity-coaching program?

These questions attempted to draw out the story of peer equity coaching in Johnson Public Schools from those that were most closely involved in process. In the next section, I present a discussion of the limitations of the study.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study that impact the generalizability of the conclusions. These are the growth of the equity coaching program from an elective model to a required model, the variability of the number of years teachers had been coached, the collaborative nature of the program, and the representative sample of teachers, equity coaches, and administrators who participated in the study. Each of these will be briefly discussed below.

Previously in this chapter, I described the growth of the equity coaching program over four years. The year of the study was the first year that equity coaching was the requisite peer feedback model within the alternative teacher professional pay system (ATPPS). Therefore, a limitation of the study was that some teachers experienced peer equity coaching as a choice while other teachers experienced equity coaching for the first time as a requirement to obtain additional teacher pay. This changes the nature of a coaching relationship, especially when additional compensation is considered.

The growth of the model created a second limitation of the study. Because the nature of transformative adult learning through equity coaching occurs over extended periods of time, and teachers participated from one to four years, teachers' responses will likely vary because of this difference.

A third limitation of the study is the collaborative nature of the model itself. Equity coaching conversations may have been impacted because the union required an annual vote in each of the first three years. If coaches pushed too hard, the union may have voted to discontinue the pilot or to defeat the adoption of the model. Or, administrators may have requested a return to the previous feedback model focused only on curriculum and instruction choices without the emphasis on cultural responsiveness and racial consciousness. The perceived lack of stability as the peer feedback model could influence how equity coaches performed their duties, how teachers received feedback, and how administrators guided decisions around the program.

A fourth limitation of the study is the sample of subjects who were interviewed. All equity coaches were invited to participate in the study. Two declined and both of these individuals were people of color, thus reducing the scope of the researcher's understanding. Many attempts were made to create a representative sample of teachers. However, if teachers declined the invitation, I then chose among the characteristics of teacher selection criteria to gather the most representative sample possible. All building principals were invited to participate, with only one being unable to do so. An additional limitation is to consider the personal motivation for each of the subjects' choices to respond to the interview requests. This was not revealed as part of the interview process, yet it is another limiting factor.

Finally, researcher bias is a limitation within this study. As described in the literature review, implicit bias is often unknown to the individual. The same will hold true for the researcher. In describing my positionality, in checking my data with the sources, in looking for themes across the data, and in fully describing the methodology,

this study meets the standards of trustworthiness required in a qualitative study. Even with limitations to the study, by narrating the story of equity coaching in Johnson Public Schools, I have put forth a significant contribution to future researchers, policy makers, and other school districts.

Summary

In this chapter, I have presented how this study is situated within the qualitative, constructivist research paradigm as a case study informed by collaborative social research and grounded theory. This was followed by a thorough description of the methodology, including data collection and analysis methods. Finally, I presented the researcher's positionality and limitations of this study.

The following three chapters present the findings of the data. Chapter 4 includes the findings from the equity coaches. Chapter 5 presents the findings from the teachers, and chapter 6 presents the findings from the administrators. In chapter 7, I will present key findings from the study.

Chapter 4

Findings from Equity Coaches

Prominent scholars have demonstrated that effective adult learning must take into account the individual's life experience, provide opportunity for reflection, and engage the learner in discussion with others (Dewey, 1938; Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2017; Mezirow, 1997; Rogers, 2002). Context is also important: often, the deepest learning occurs after a significant event that creates a disorienting dilemma (Calleja, 2014; Mezirow, 1997) or disequilibrium (Dewey, 1938). Adult learning can also be incremental, occurring over time through critical reflection and discourse. The more challenging the learning, the more critical these elements become. This is obviously the case when adults are confronted with implicit racial or cultural biases not previously considered. In this case, change may require cultivating cultural knowledge through a broad array of experiences, and by positioning others' experience in the context of broader social and political events (Brown, 2006; Cochran-Smith, 2000; Devine, et al., 2012; Gooden & Dantley, 2012; Hines & Atherton, 2015; McIntosh, 1988; Sleeter, 2001). Equity coaching in Johnson Public Schools provided multiple opportunities for adult learning.

In this chapter, I present descriptions of adult learning as reported by eight equity coaches from Johnson Public Schools. First, I will describe the role of the equity coaches, their training, and the process they used to guide adult learning. I will then present a description of the transformative adult learning that equity coaches observed in three areas—teachers' self-reflection that deepened culturally responsive relationships,

expanded curricular choices, and inclusive pedagogical practices. Last, I will present the challenges equity coaches described in doing their work.

The Role of an Equity Coach

Equity coaches in Johnson Public Schools had a complex job description. Their primary role was to coach forty to forty-five teachers throughout the school year. Most coaches were assigned to one building and the teachers they coached worked at those same schools. Each coaching session involved a pre-conference, a class observation, a post-observation conference, and a completed feedback form submitted to the alternative teacher professional pay system (ATPPS) coordinator to document eligibility for additional alternative pay. Coaches completed this process for each of their assigned teachers in the fall and in the spring. In the middle of the year, the coaches redistributed their rosters to other equity coaches or equity observers due to a requirement that teachers receive feedback from two different peers each year. Administrators did not receive or review this feedback, which is separate from the evaluative observations building administrators complete.

In addition to coaching, equity coaches provided professional development to faculty and staff members at the schools to which they are assigned, and co-led sessions in other schools with other equity coaches. Equity coaches hosted book discussions as well as voluntary training to practice “courageous conversations” about racial equity using relevant articles or current events throughout the school year. Many equity coaches served on either district or building staff development committees, and six of the equity coaches also were trained facilitators in the Pacific Educational Group’s *Beyond*

Diversity workshops, leading two-day sessions for Johnson Public Schools as well as for other school districts.

While equity coaches have specific job duties, the mission of their work was to disrupt racism and create systemic change. One equity coach, when asked what they loved about being an equity coach, quoted the job description stating, “To develop will, skills, and capacity of educators in order to disrupt racism in order to impact and improve the achievement and experiences of students.” The coach continued by saying, “And, when I focus on that, it doesn’t mean just coaching. It means looking at our systems, looking at our structures, looking at our policies and asking questions about those things too” (EC1¹).

Equity coaches were often seen as individuals with an open door, where teachers, staff, or administrators could talk through situations where the educator needed a safe space to discuss what was happening with a lesson, a student, a class, or a decision. Equity coaches reported that teachers periodically stopped by to talk about a conflict with the student, parent or colleague, and discussed how racial or cultural perspectives or implicit bias may be present. Teachers may have had an interaction with a student or were having a hard time making a connection with a student, and asked to talk through what might be getting in the way.

Equity coaches also reported that teachers asked for ideas or resources to expand the curricular narrative so that lessons could be presented from multiple cultural perspectives. When equity coaching first began, the original equity coaches reported that they were called in all the time. One equity coach said, “The first year it was just getting

¹ EC1 and subsequent EC2-8 identifies which equity coach is quoted.

called all the time. ‘We have an equity issue, could you come here?’ People just felt like they couldn’t deal with that, so it’s like I was an equity EMT” (EC6). Equity coaches were viewed not only as peer equity coaches, but also as local guides in culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum.

Training to Become an Equity Coach

As described in the literature review, culturally responsive teaching starts with critical awareness of self (Gay, 2010a; Gay, 2010b; Hammond, 2015; Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995). Therefore, in order to assist others in recognizing cultural and racial barriers to equitable education, equity coaches first developed their own critical self-reflection. As a team, they reviewed their formative years and past experiences in racial autobiographies to become aware of their own deeply held beliefs, implicit biases, and cultural values that shaped their actions and responses. One equity coach described the connection between critical self-reflection and their roles in the following way.

This is about a process of really looking at who we are and being so mindful of who we are throughout the day, all day. And then if we’re really wanting to live as racial equity leaders, then it’s not just a job. It becomes part of your lifestyle. So that means you’re taking it home. You’re asking questions and you’re wondering about things and you’re challenging things that go on outside of school because you know. (EC1)

Equity coaches had various levels of training and experience in approaching their roles. All had been teachers and all were trained through two levels of *Beyond Diversity* with the Pacific Educational Group (PEG). In addition, all current equity coaches and

their principal-on-special- assignment attended the National Summit for Courageous Conversations in October 2016 as a team. Several equity coaches described this experience as a staff retreat that was used to deepen their relationships, understand their purpose, and discuss how they would work together throughout the year. All practiced using the Courageous Conversations About Race (Singleton & Linton, 2006) protocol and compass, which was the framework for each coaching conversation and staff training. (See Appendix).

Several equity coaches acquired additional preparation as part of their previous roles. Six of the equity coaches received additional training through Pacific Educational Group to become affiliates who lead *Beyond Diversity I* sessions, which provided them with a personal racial equity coach to lead deeper personal reflection. One coach described the most significant learning of the affiliate training was deeply understanding “what the protocol means and how to use it. How to [develop] a very deep understanding about how to have a conversation about race in a way that creates space for multiple voices, where there’s not one that are more valued or whatnot. But, how to do that, which is really hard!” (EC6)

The first three equity coaches also trained with Jamie Almanzán, an independent consultant who guided the district in the original development of the equity-coaching program. One coach stated,

I think what I found most useful about working with him [Jamie Almanzán] is that he kind of helped me to understand coaching and questioning and the power of asking effective questions. Because, there is a temptation to go in and say, “Well, you should do this, this and this.” It takes more reflection and intention to

think, “How could I ask a question that is going to invite this teacher to really look at what they’re doing?” (EC3)

Two of the first three equity coaches attended instructional coaching training with Jim Knight, which focused on asking questions for teachers to reflect on their instruction. Four of the equity coaches previously attended a coaching for racial equity seminar sponsored by Pacific Educational Group, and several attended training in mindful inquiry with nationally acclaimed trainer Lee Mun Wah.

Each of the equity coaches described the benefits of having an interracial team of equity coaches with whom they could further their own understanding of race and culture, and in turn, facilitate understanding for their teachers. While each described a unique path to obtaining the Equity Coach position, all coaches discussed the ongoing learning, support, and reflection they practiced weekly during their equity coaching team meeting. One coach stated,

And, having racial affinity in our group...to check me on this, [to ask], ‘Where have you struggled with this?’ And then having the interracial spaces on our team as well. That is hands-down been my deepest learning—the interracial group team meetings and relationships. (EC3)

Equity coaches found multiple pathways to develop their own learning in racial consciousness and peer equity coaching.

Process of Equity Coaching in Johnson Public Schools

Equity coaching was described as deeply personal process of deepening awareness of how race and culture influenced and impacted an educator’s actions, decisions, choices, language, messages, body language, and expectations. Equity

coaches described two steps to this process. The first was developing their own racial consciousness, and the second was meeting their teachers at their level of readiness through reflective questions. Each of these is described below.

Developing racial consciousness.

All of the eight equity coaches described their own growth in becoming more racially conscious. Several described their efforts to “show up authentically” or “as one’s whole self” and their efforts to guide their teachers to do the same. One coach described the need to:

Show up authentically...[It] is part of the job description because [it is] what I’m asking of the people that I work with in terms of coaching...We are asking them [peers and administrators] to show up authentically as well. So part of the process of this job is modeling how to, modeling what it looks like to really admit some things. Whether they are positive things, whether they are negative things, flaws, places where, over the years, I missed it or messed up. Places where over the years I’ve had doubt or confusion. But that’s part of that process, that unpacking process. And that’s part of the job description to really be reflective of self and really be honest with self every step of the way. And so I’m noticing things in myself, noticing things in circumstances and situations and not burying it. But, not internalizing it. Letting it come out as part of the process. Sharing those things and saying, “Hey look, this is kind of confusing to me, and here’s why,” and being able to speak to that. That’s being part of the process of being a self-reflective practitioner and encouraging others to do the same. (EC1)

Another coach described the coaching relationship and the need to be fully present, saying:

I think this model is deeply personal. And it's about this relationship. And, once we can get in that space of like, "Yes this is who I am. I can show up as my full self for the kids, which is making strong young people who then grow up to be courageous adults who make our world better." So, the impact is still kids at the center and it's in the space of the adult changing to become their best self. (EC5)

In both of the descriptions of equity coaching, "showing up authentically" and "showing up as my full self" are two phrases that get to the heart of what equity coaching in Johnson Public Schools attempted to do. The goal was to develop trusting relationships where teachers could unpack personal understanding of their own racial and cultural selves. Using questions to build trust and to understand individuals' receptivity to developing racial consciousness was the cornerstone of the equity coaches' work. A description of growth in racial consciousness through the use of questions to guide reflection follows.

Building trust: Meet them where they're at.

Several equity coaches discussed how they consciously tried to build trust while assessing teachers' receptivity to self-reflection around racial and cultural consciousness. One coach described the process by saying, "I go out and just try to really see people for who they are and try to build a connection and a relationship there so we have some sort of foundation to really dig in and do some meaningful work" (EC6). Another stated that they tried to provide

those spaces where you get to pause and have authentic conversations, to show up vulnerable. When I reflect back to the mentoring I had my first two years, [I was] able to say, “This is what I’m struggling with,” or to have the observer say, “Hey, was this on your radar?” and be like, “No,” or “Oh my gosh, tell me more about that.” (EC3)

A third coach said, “Hey, people are where they’re at, and we have to keep doing what we’re doing, and here’s how some of us deal with this” (EC1). A fourth coach reflected, “I think it’s kind of being the truth teller, but doing it in a way that doesn’t shut everybody down on the route there. As soon as someone doesn’t feel safe or heard or valued, they’re out” (EC8).

The literature describes the need for adults to have social, emotional and personal safety before they can think critically about their actions. In the statements above, equity coaches described their efforts to build trusting relationships to provide the social and emotional safety necessary for adult learning. To develop a trusting relationship also required understanding the developmental readiness of teachers, where equity coaches used questioning to guide teachers in reflection. One equity coach started many conversations with, “How do you feel that went?” because the teacher often brings forward their own reflections” (EC3). Another stated they used the phrase, “Tell me your beliefs around that’... to... get them to name...where they’re coming from” (EC4). Another asked, “What are your thoughts about this?” or “What is your role in this?” (EC1).

One equity coach described asking teachers to ponder a question over time, to continue the reflection after their session together. The coach suggested to the teacher,

I'm gonna ask you to walk with this question, so I don't want you to give me an answer right now. It's something I want you to just kind of go with and then, don't force yourself to answer it. Just let the answer come to you, and "I'd love to hear your thoughts." And then, I might ask them kind of a tough question or something. (EC6)

The process of equity coaching began with the coaches developing their own deep racial and cultural awareness in weekly team meetings. Equity coaches then developed trusting relationships that led to teachers' reflection and development of racial and cultural consciousness. But, according to the coaches, trust is not enough to change teacher practice. In the next section, I present how equity coaches used those trusting relationships to transform teachers' relationships with their students, their curriculum, and their pedagogy.

Transformative Adult Learning

Transformative adult learning is, as Mezirow (1997) described, a "process of effecting change in a *frame of reference*" (p. 5). Equity coaching provided an opportunity for teachers and coaches to reflect about their own and others' communications styles, core values, cultural norms and ways of being—to see people, actions, and circumstances from multiple perspectives. This reflection could then change teachers' frames of reference regarding their views of students, parents, and one another. One equity coach described transformative moments in the following way:

They [the teachers] get goose bumps, and they tell me, "I've never thought about this this way. I've never looked at my students this way." And, when I realize there's still transformation after teaching twenty years, that you can still have that

impact on a teacher, where I can really get through to somebody to see things differently. Then I know that that teacher is going to look at their students differently after that. And so when I have those moments with teachers is when I feel like I am making a difference. (EC7)

Equity coaches pointed to and gave examples of adult learning and transformative learning in three areas—the classroom environment, the curriculum, and pedagogy. A discussion of changes in the classroom environment follows.

Shifts in the classroom environment.

Several equity coaches described changes in frames of reference regarding teachers' classroom environments, some of which involved a precipitating disorienting dilemma, but all of which were described as engaging gradual teacher learning through application and observation. In particular, three described changes in teacher-student relationships. One equity coach, for example, described a powerfully transformative moment with a teacher who had been resistant to equity coaching and any professional development focused on racial and cultural equity. The coach developed a relationship with the teacher throughout the school year, just listening and getting to know one another:

And then whenever I'd do an observation, I would tally things. I would tally how many times she called on boys of color, girls of color, how many times she would correct them, how many times she'd say something positive. And I remember we had a really powerful post-observation where I showed her the data. And she'd given a lot of negative feedback to one Black girl and then a lot of positive to a lot of White kids. And then I showed it to her, and she was like, "Oh my God, I

didn't even realize I was doing that!" And I was able to say, "And how do you think that feels to her?" She said, "It probably feels horrible." And then she's like, "I really don't like her!" She's like, "I just don't like her, and her mom doesn't care about her." I can't remember what she said, but she had beliefs that her mom didn't care about school, all these beliefs. But, because I had loved her for this whole year and listened, even though that felt like, "Whoa, this is taking a long time." Like, once we got to that point, we went right in. Ok, let's look at that belief. Let's go look at this, let's go look at this. And she was like changing beliefs, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. And now, you know, this year it's been a really different experience coaching her because she's just much more open... And, she just said to me the other day in passing, "You know, like, people of color have to deal with so much racism all the time. I don't even understand it." (EC6)

The teacher in this one moment saw in the coach's tally marks how her assumptions about one student was having a negative affect on the child. And she chose to reflect on this disorienting moment through critical discourse with the coach to change her relationship with the student. Additionally, this was the transformative catalyst for the teacher to fully engage in developing her own racial consciousness.

In response to a teacher who was frustrated because she believed her girls were lying, an equity coach asked a question that expanded the narrow cultural bias the teacher held. The coach simply asked, "Are Somali girls the only...kids who lie?" The teacher exclaimed, "Oh my God! They're kids! They're goanna lie!" (EC8). The equity coach's question allowed the teacher to recognize her implicit bias that lying was a behavior

exhibited only by Somali girls in her class. The response of the teacher demonstrated a shift in this teacher's frame of reference.

Another coach described a more gradual learning experience that involved several coaching sessions with a teacher struggling with a group of boys in her class after a new student moved in. The coach guided the teacher to reflect on times in her life when she may have worked through similar situations, and then guided her to share that with her students. The coach stated,

The teacher...was worried about the dynamics of a new kid coming in: power dynamics, a friendship shift. Who was king of the mountain when the [new] one came in? A lot of it was leading to other boys following along and falling in in a negative way. Once we got to unpacking it, we started looking at friendship. Like, when has this bothered you in terms of her friendships? She was able to go back and talk about high school how the dynamic of having another friend come in changed the dynamic between her and her best friend. And how that still plays out as adults when certain people can change the dynamics of groups. This certain couple can come over and changes the dynamics, "I'm not called," and what that feels like, and transferring that into having a conversation with the kids involved in terms of what it means to be friends. And she started creating little talking sessions during their lunch, inviting them in to talk about friendship, what it means, and having them process what it means to have [friendship when someone new moves in]... [She was] able to share her experience based on that so they know...my teacher can relate. (EC1)

This equity coach guided the teacher to sit with the students to grow together by sharing personal stories. It allowed the teacher to coach her students in building and maintaining friendships by sharing how she worked through those similar situations rather than responding after a disagreement or fight between the boys. The coach summed up this story with the statement,

You know, those kinds of things may come to surface, and we might get some different experiences and different results overall if kids are really able to talk about a lot more than what we put in the space for them to talk about. (EC1)

This process of engaging student voice changed the nature of the classroom environment. Rather than simply correcting the boys after disagreements, the coach guided the teacher to talk about the nature of friendship. Things changed when the teacher listened to her students, shared her experiences, and developed the students' thinking around friendship.

Adult learning through equity coaching was not always triggered by a disorienting dilemma. It also occurred as teachers pondered reflective questions over time. One equity coach framed discussions around student-teacher relationships in the following way:

Kids' behavior is their best attempt to get a need met. I think I have teachers now who are more in that reflective space around, "What does this kid really need in this moment? What does it look like to use whatever strategies like a TAB-in [take a break in the classroom] where they take a time-out in the back of the room or out in the hall or out in the TAB [take-a-break] out room? How are we using that to reconnect a kid to learning as opposed to remove them and punish them?" (EC4)

This equity coach also discussed seeing teachers build authentic relationships with students over time, saying,

As teachers really lean in and make those relationships a two-way reciprocal relationship as opposed to “I’m going to build a relationship so I can get you to do the thing I want you to do,” I think...teachers have success with it. Teachers who have real authentic relationships with their kids, it doesn’t mean that it’s perfect, it doesn’t mean that it’s, you know, always going to be excellent learning from every kid every minute. But I think you can see some growth there. (EC4)

In each of these instances, the equity coach described a gradual shift in teachers’ frames of reference to see student-teacher relationships as authentic—caring about the youth rather than transactional—caring enough to get the youth to do what I, the teacher, need or want you to do.

Another equity coach modeled self-reflection and perspective-taking to develop teachers’ understanding of their biases and to consider the student experience. The coach described this, saying,

If we consider how we think about time: how we show up in the church pew a minute before Mass starts, why are we upset if another does the same? Like, even examining my concept of time. Like my dad said, “If you’re not somewhere five minutes early, you’re late.” So, what do I internalize about my students who are sprinting down the hall to make it to my class on time, and getting there right at the bell, and thinking, “Oh, some will learn more than others”? So, that’s just like one, your idea. And two, break that down racially. We often hear from students of color, that “When I go into classes where I’m a minority, I need the

spaces in the hallway where I can be with my friends where I'm not, where I can be seen and fully recognized.” And so, being able to dive deeper and hear the student's perspective [is important]. And, if a student is coming late to my class, what is the need that I'm not meeting for them in that class? Or, what is it about my class, or what do I need to learn about that student? (EC3)

These stories demonstrate transformative adult learning regarding the relationships between students and teachers that create classroom environment. Equity coaches have also described changes in teachers' curricula, which will be described in the next section.

Curriculum shifts.

In addition to shifts in the classroom environment, equity coaches described changes in curricular choices. While there are state and national standards regarding curriculum, how each story or idea is discussed and taught is uniquely each teacher's choice. Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, in her TED Talk entitled *The Danger of a Single Story*, cautions against viewing people through one story told over and over again because it limits the narrative and the understanding of the individual or group of people (Adichie, 2009). In Johnson Public Schools, equity coaches shared how they offered multiple questions to teachers that expanded the “story of the curriculum” to include more than one narrative. One equity coach described this by stating,

...curriculum, like whose story gets told. And, you know we have teachers who are...conscious and try to bring in a side story, but they are side stories. And that's because fifteen people in Texas decide what's in the textbooks. And so, the amount of work that gets put on them to offer different perspective[s]. I think

often it's easy to go to history, but what are we analyzing or what text are we offering in our English courses? (EC3)

Another equity coach described the growth in teachers' understanding of culturally responsive curriculum by asking questions that challenged the narrative presented in the assigned texts. The coach said, "I'm hearing teachers speaking up more in meetings to question, 'Whose perspectives are here? Whose perspectives racially are we missing? What haven't we considered?'" They are thinking more critically through a lens of race" (EC2).

The above descriptions illustrate gradual changes that took place over time, but there were also disorienting dilemmas that led to transformative learning related to curriculum selection. One coach described the following transformative pre-conference meeting with an elementary teacher:

We were talking about the next lesson and I said, "So speak to me about what some of the missing perspectives are in this." And she said, "Well, I don't know, women and whatever." And I said, "In regard to race." And I don't remember the exact topic, but I said something about, "What do you know about our nation's history in regards to who is being responsible for building and creating that?" And it just got her to really think, "I don't really know." And I said, "Do you know who Benjamin Banneker is?" And she said, "No, I've never heard that name in my whole life." And I said, "I want to invite you to do some research on who he was, and just reflect on how you're feeling about hearing that name for the first time. And, let's meet again tomorrow and let's talk about how we can place him at the center of this lesson." And she did. And she came back and was like, "Oh

my God, I'm so emotional because I didn't know! And so, what else do I not know? And how do I find it out?"... Because as she learned more about Benjamin Banneker and his work and creating the blueprint for Washington D.C., that became the center of her lesson. And now, she's like, "Who else do I need to make the center of my lesson?" She's taking it one lesson and one step at a time instead of like, "Oh my Gosh, I didn't know that I didn't know all of this and I'm feeling guilty." (EC5)

This equity coach then described the reflection from the post-conference with the teacher after she presented the lesson to her students. Not only did the teacher discover the contributions of Benjamin Banneker, the students experienced a similar discovery of their implicit biases. The teacher's students were predominantly White. At one point in the lesson, the teacher said the students stopped and said, "'Wait. This was a Black man who did all this?' And I [the teacher] didn't know and I never heard of him. And they are eleven!" The equity coach stated, "the teacher felt a real sense of pride in like, 'I'm decentering whiteness in this curriculum and it felt good'" (EC5).

In this example, students learned an expanded narrative of how the city of Washington D.C. was designed to include the contribution of Benjamin Banneker in addition to work of Pierre L'Enfant, most often cited as the city's designer. These eleven year olds interrupted their implicitly biased narratives, and their expectation of social status by seeing a Black man, the son of formerly enslaved people, as laying the foundation of our nation's capital city. This is transformative learning for both adults and students.

In summary, equity coaches guided teachers to ask questions about whose voices were missing in the current curriculum, to change the status quo of the accepted narrative. Content is only part of the story of classrooms. In the next section I will describe how equity coaches guided teachers to develop culturally responsive pedagogy.

Pedagogy.

Pedagogy—*how* teachers teach—in Johnson Public Schools was shaped through equity coaching. One equity coach described what teachers might ask themselves in planning culturally responsive pedagogy. The equity coach stated:

It's who gets taught; level of questioning. That's a big one. Who's required to critically think? Like connection of content to students' lives. Teacher talk time versus student talk time is huge. And I see that as teachers wanting students to know the knowledge, and we know from studies that when we get students talking on content, they learn more. [And] who gets sent to the behavior room? (EC3)

The same equity coach described the constant internal feedback loop each teacher must engage in order to be culturally responsive. Along with teaching the content, the equity coach stated:

I see that our form of teacher training wasn't enough, that I need to constantly be examining my biases. And sometimes our biases can fall along skin color, sometimes they can fall along gender, sometimes those biases can fall along like, "Hey I have three vocal students in my class and it's just easier to respond to them." And I feel like I'm getting feedback, and I literally can't process thirty-seven faces at one time. And so, until I can shift that in my mind, and I can pause and I've checked in with all the corners [of the compass], I might be teaching to

just three students. And they might be a diverse group of three students, but that's who I'm teaching to. (EC3)

In both of these examples, the equity coach described how culturally responsive teachers used a process of internal monitoring while simultaneously teaching. The teacher monitored how much they were talking compared to the students and which students were doing the talking. Pedagogical choices could increase or inhibit both of these.

Another equity coach described a different pedagogical choice. The teacher asked the students to notice what they saw in the textbook pictures prior to teaching the content. The equity coach said,

Her process was getting kids to name what they notice. "Here are all the presidents of the United States in the back of your social studies books. What do you notice?" You know, we really had to unpack [that] she didn't know where the conversations were going to go and that felt scary. (EC2)

The scary part for the teacher was not knowing where the student discussion would lead, whether the students would name the obvious characteristic that all United States presidents were White men until 2008, and what their wonderings would include. The equity coach helped the teacher plan for the discussion and accept not having all the answers.

Another equity coach described their own reflections on why they, as a teacher, used routine pedagogical choices. "Oh I was doing it this way...just because. And so I started to ask why I wanted it that way, and why I thought I needed it that way" (EC4). This equity coach shared that questioning the routine strategy as a teacher brought to

consciousness that not all students were engaged because of the choice of strategies used. The coach used this reflection when coaching teachers to examine their routine pedagogical choices.

Another equity coach described a series of questions they asked when a teacher described a negative student response to a lesson. The coach asked, “What was the impact on your students and how do you know?...What did you hear or see? What did you hear or see from your students of color? And if you don’t know, how do you find out?” (EC3). These questions guided the teacher to action. How was the teacher going to really know the impact of pedagogical choices on the students? The teacher needed to understand why the student response was so negative, and the way to do that was to ask the students.

Several coaches stated that part of their work was to coach teachers through the feeling of loss of control with the increase of student voice.

And, we have to be willing to understand that, not only with ourselves, but with young people. Just to [say], “Hey, I don’t necessarily need to be the expert as a teacher in order to have this conversation happen. And, if I allow student voice to show up then maybe, *maybe* I might get some different outcomes in other areas in terms of how kids relate to each other, how they feel about themselves, about whose voice has value, whose voice doesn’t.” (EC1)

Equity coaches also guided teachers to become self-reflective about their own racial and cultural experiences and to use that self-knowledge to increase student voice, develop authentic student-teacher relationships, and increase cultural responsiveness through pedagogy and curriculum. They showed teachers the value of continually

engaging a feedback loop, noticing what is happening real-time in their classrooms and monitoring their responses through a lens of equity.

I have described examples of transformative adult learning either through disorienting dilemmas or through dialogue over time largely through the lens of positive experiences and impacts. There are challenges that the equity coaches reported as well, to which I now turn.

Challenges

Equity coaches, along with describing the positive impact of their work, also described significant challenges as well. There were four primary areas in which equity coaches reported difficulty. These areas are (a) perceived resistance from teachers, (b) the cumulative personal impact of the burden of knowing, (c) the evaluative framework in which the program exists, and (d) administrative barriers. Each of these areas is addressed below.

Perceived teacher resistance.

Each of the equity coaches described their difficulty in working with teachers whom they perceived to be resistant to equity coaching. Sometimes this was observed as a disconnection between what people said in the coaching meetings and what their actions demonstrated. Other times, this appeared in staff trainings, where teachers remained silent, did not participate in discussions, or avoided the meetings altogether. At times, resistance was expressed in vocal opposition, or walking out of staff development meetings.

However that resistance appeared, it was the goal of the equity coaches to continually try to meet teachers where they were at, to continue to engage, to understand what the motivation and readiness to learn might be, and to create space where the teachers felt emotionally and socially safe to engage in the dialogue. One coach articulated this ongoing work by saying:

The hardest part for me is when my colleagues are not so open to hear, not so open to engage in the conversation, and then I realize it's on me. And so I need to keep bringing it back to me because my job is to meet them wherever they are, not to just drag them over to where I am. I need to be able to meet them wherever they are in order to move forward. (EC7)

Two of the equity coaches talked about the differences between what people say and what people do. The first coach reflected:

It's unfortunate that some people feel like they are not comfortable, for whatever reasons, being able to say exactly what they do or have their actions match their words; as opposed to telling me one thing using all the terminology, saying one thing, and then going and your practice shows something else. Or you're going off telling someone else something that speaks to the way that you really feel.

(EC1)

Another equity coach reported this similarly:

I would say the hardest part is the people who show you one face or one side and then they go back and say or do something else. So, I often will watch what your feet do. You can say a lot to me, but what are your feet doing? (EC5)

A third coach reflected, “I can only coach you as willing as you are to be coached. And we can only collaborate around racial equity as much as you are willing to commit to that with fidelity and to doing your own work” (EC2). A fourth coach described interactions with one teacher over time, saying:

And many different times that I would see her in passing or in post observations, there was a lot of “can’t stand this work.” She got up and left a meeting when I was doing professional development once. She was offended. I’d heard second hand that she said to a number of people, “I don’t know why the district is doing this equity work,” and it’s just like, “we have so many more important things to focus on.” She just had a lot of resistance, a lot of anger, a lot of just really didn’t want to have anything to do with it. (EC6)

This teacher is the same teacher whose transformative post-observation was described earlier in the chapter, who saw in the post-observation data how much she corrected a Black girl in her classroom and more positively responded to the White students. So, even though teachers were perceived as resistant, equity coaches continued to be open and provide opportunities for understanding.

Equity coaches offered reflections about why they believed teachers were resistant or silent. These ranged from teachers feeling blamed and shamed, fear of not being perfect, fear of judgment, or fear of loss of control. One coach stated,

I think there’s a group of people with vocal opposition to it who say we’re spending too much time talking about race, who are feeling blamed and shamed around race, and who don’t want to engage in that conversation. (EC4)

Another equity coach shared:

One of the things I've really been learning about this year is around White silence. And I know that for me, one of the ways that whiteness and white supremacy shows up in me is individualism and perfectionism. And so, this belief that I can go it alone, and I'm better at going it alone. (EC3)

Teachers who feel they can do things better on their own will likely have less interest in being coached by a peer.

One equity coach stated that teachers have fear of judgment from their colleagues or administrators even as they are growing in their understanding. The coach described this in the following way:

I think another piece is that our staff here is hugely White...and I've heard teachers that I work with name [that]. And they struggle around some of the equity work. And they're looking at whiteness and picking things up and kind of start to question things. And sometimes what that looks like is they let things slide more. And...teachers have named [that] through this process...they don't want to send kids to time out. They're afraid to, not of the kids, but afraid that they shouldn't be sending them there or that there will be judgment with that. (EC4)

Other equity coaches described that teachers feared the loss of control in classroom discussions or expanding the curriculum. One coach stated that equity coaching assists teachers in managing this fear by providing a framework for discussion.

The coach shared the following:

And, that's an interesting thing that we struggle with as educators, of feeling like we have to always have control of what the learning is supposed to look like.

And, I think part of this model involves us dealing with the unknown. Like, when

we have courageous conversations, we can frame the conversation of how we're goanna talk about things and what we're goanna talk about, but we can't frame exactly where it's goanna go, and what people are going to be leaving with because people are people. And, we have to be willing to understand that, not only with ourselves, but with young people. Just to, "Hey, I don't necessarily [need to] be the expert as a teacher in order to have this conversation happen."
(EC1)

It is clear from the data reported in this section that equity coaching was received by some teachers less positively than by others. Some teachers avoided, opposed, or demonstrated actions that were different than their stated intentions. Equity coaches surmised from their many discussions with teachers, that resistance or avoidance came from some teachers' fear of loss of control, fear of being blamed and shamed, or fear of judgment. The literature would suggest that the components of adult learning theory were not met, or teachers did not feel emotionally, socially, or physically safe enough to wholly engage in developing cultural responsiveness.

Cumulative impact of the burden of knowing.

A second challenge for equity coaches was the daily observation that the school experience was difficult for many students of color. Equity coaches observed students of color experience low expectations, systemic racism, and micro-aggressions while simultaneously engaging with teachers who were resistant to critical self-reflection or developing culturally responsive practices. And it was the equity coach's duty to create a sense of urgency that the teachers become culturally responsive to interrupt the negative

experiences based on race that students of color were experiencing. This cumulative burden of knowing was difficult for equity coaches to manage.

Two equity coaches talked about seeing students being treated in dehumanizing ways. One coach stated, “The hardest thing is that I feel like am constantly a witness of how our systems hurt our students. And I want to use the word de-humanize our students” (EC3). Another equity coach stated:

The more I wake up and see racism, the more I walk through the halls of the school and see the dehumanization of our students, it’s extremely painful. It’s really hard to go in there and not want to step in because sometime there’s some really messed up stuff going on. (EC6)

One equity coach described this burden in the following way:

This is about a process of really looking at who we are and being so mindful of who we are throughout the day, all day... You know, being conscious in America, that those things have a great influence on what you’re going to be seeing inside the school walls. So, it’s really a big, it’s a heavy load. I’ll put it that way. It’s a heavy load. So, that’s why, for us to have one other to kind of share that burden is so necessary. (EC1)

As described earlier in this chapter, equity coaches met weekly to debrief, to manage their caseloads, and to support one another in carrying the burden of knowing.

This coach continued:

It seems like it’s [equity coaching] only going to work if you have other people that you can connect with and you have that shared bonding. Because a lot of this feels like educational therapy sometimes, when we are coaching teachers and

teachers open up and really let down their guard and talk about some things that are deeply personal, deeply conflicting, deeply emotional. And we're almost like psychologists or therapists on the couch while they are emotional and letting all these things out. And we need somewhere to process that too. Otherwise, we take a lot of people's stuff on and, just as educators in general, we want to fix stuff.

We want to give someone a prescription. And this is not an easy thing to do, racial transformation. It's not an easy thing. It's not an easy fix. (EC1)

Equity coaches used the weekly meetings to recharge and reconnect with one another, to share in carrying the burden of knowing. They used the time to share strategies, to unpack their own biases and questions, and to assist their colleagues in doing the same.

Evaluative framework.

The third challenge for equity coaches is the framework in which equity coaching exists. All coaches discussed the alternative teacher professional pay system (ATPPS) as a barrier to deeper equity coaching. They described two specific challenges because of this framework. First, using the alternative teacher pay model of teacher evaluation inherently changed the nature of the program from peer coaching to peer evaluation. Secondly, using this model of teacher evaluation as the framework of the equity coaching program created tension between the union and the district about how the program should be run. Each of these challenges is described below.

Peer evaluation versus peer coaching.

Peer coaching, as the literature describes it, is non-evaluative, situated in trusting relationships between coach and coachee, are focused on student learning, are context-based, and are informed by critical reflection (Ackland, 1991; Cornett & Knight, 2009; Huston & Weaver, 2007; Knight et al., 2015; Wong & Nicotera, 2003; Woulfin, 2014). The peer equity coaching program in Johnson Public Schools met the descriptions for peer coaching except for this program's evaluative component connected to the alternative teacher pay system.

To receive their additional compensation, teachers were required to demonstrate proficiency in teaching. This proficiency was determined and reported by the peer equity coach, complicating the relationship between coach and coachee. One equity coach discussed this complicating, evaluative component in the following way:

And with that tension between I want to coach people and have a relationship with them as a peer [is] I can say that I'm not here to judge you. I'm not here to evaluate you, but I do have to fill out these twelve check boxes. And so in practice, huge percentages, and this is statewide too, huge percentages of our teachers get the bonus every year for being labeled as proficient. And so, it's that kind of thing where I'm not going to sweat [it], like I don't feel it's my job, it's not my purpose in this to say, "Oh I didn't see enough of this, so I'm going to keep you at basic." Like, I'm not evaluating teachers, so I don't have to do that piece of it, and so I think there's a weird tension there. (EC4)

Some equity coaches appreciated that, since the model was adopted district-wide, all teachers were required to participate in coaching. Every teacher was engaged in three

meetings each year focused on racial and cultural equity in their classrooms. However, as described in adult learning theory, if all conditions are not met, the teacher may be resistant, avoidant, or campaign against it. One equity coach described this in the following way:

The other piece too is a technicality, but so important is that my meetings with the teachers is mandatory and last year it wasn't. So, this is the first year that everyone's required to do it and it's attached to compensation. And that carries with it a lot of, especially at the beginning of the year, this resistance. There's this, "I know I have to do this, but I don't really want to." But I have a little bit more leverage. I heard you say this before, "This is a peer model." This is a peer model, but I am also supervising, and there's a dynamic there that I continue to feel. I felt it today as I was shooting off emails, "I need you to submit this report. I need you to do this for observation three." And I was thinking, "This doesn't feel like a peer here." Because, based on what I submit, they get this x amount of money. (EC2)

In addition to the evaluative nature of the alternative teacher pay model, the standard evaluative forms used by the original building instructional leaders had not been altered. So, the feedback discussed in the equity coaching sessions did not at times match what was required for reporting. One equity coach described the following:

You may have heard some of this too, is that it started off with there were two Q Comp [Quality Compensation] models working side by side, and they kind of merged together. It was kind of like we have this equity stuff kind of built on top of this standard, evaluative, from-the-state, Charlotte Danielson [2007] kind of

thing. And to me...the way those pieces don't fit together leaves me with questions...I mean, I would hopefully [like] to build a model that more directly supports the work we're trying to do...using a portfolio model. (EC4)

Another equity coach described even more critically the misalignment of the standard alternative teacher professional pay system (ATPPS) forms and the nature of equity coaching:

The ATPPS rubric that the pay is based on has nothing to do with equity. I could mark you proficient and you could be completely racially dis-conscious and you harming your kids of color and your White students. I see that as a systemically racist piece of our system; that our rubric by which we as equity [coaches] have to use, equity or racial equity is not embedded in it. So, we use other forms. We supplement. But, if someone is going to play by the book, they could say, "I only want you using this rubric because that's what my pay is tied to, and I've demonstrated all of this." Now, that's not happening, but it could. (EC2)

Equity coaches struggled with understanding their role as a coach situated within the framework of an evaluator. And, the forms they used did not align with the conversations they were having. This presented a challenge, as the components of adult learning theory with a sense of social and emotional safety were not met. In the next section, I describe the ownership conflict embedded in equity coaching's placement within the alternative teacher pay framework.

Ownership conflict.

The alternative teacher professional pay (ATPPS) model, as described in Chapter 3, was a cooperative teacher evaluation model between the teachers' union and the

district administration. It required the bargaining unit and district administration to collaborate in designing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the program. Having achieved this initial agreement indicated the level of commitment from teachers and administrators in developing the peer equity coaching program. However, because both the union and administration fund the program, both parties also wanted to direct it. Equity coaches reported not only tension in this process, but also discomfort at being in the middle. One equity coach reported this tension in the following way:

I think the other piece too that I want to bring into it is, yes there is this discomfort in talking about race and that pushes it there [towards resistance] too. But then I think you also have an interesting dynamic of the union versus the district and who's controlling the money, and those pieces are there too. (EC4)

At times, equity coaches reported feeling that their peers monitored their time in the building. Teachers felt that, because the union was co-funding the program, they should monitor the coaches' time to be sure they were getting the value of the investment. One equity coach stated:

I know teachers in my building in particular kept track of my time in the building and out of the building. Have I heard that from *them*? No. And so, again, it's that piece about, "I want to know my coach is here." It's kind of an ironic situation. "I want to know my coach is here, but I don't want her/him to push me." (EC2)

Another equity coach explained this monitoring and its effect in the following statement:

And so, it's really hard because you feel like you're under attack and then that often times puts me on the defensive as to, "Let me make sure that people see me and that I'm carrying a laptop and make sure they see me with books...I don't get

the benefit of the doubt and I've got to make sure that at all times, when people see me, that I am really in a space where I am your equity coach. Here's a book, here's the iPad, or here's whatever. Because if they see me and it appears that I am not doing this work, then it becomes this narrative of, "Well this equity coaching model is crap..." (EC5)

Equity coaches felt monitored by their peers. They felt that equity-coaching involved a certain level of personal discomfort for teachers, but pushing too far may jeopardize the program. In addition to these sets of challenges, equity coaches experienced resistance at times from school and district administrators.

Systemic decision-making.

The final challenge reported by equity coaches was administrative resistance to the work they were hired to do. At times, this was in response to questions equity coaches raised regarding processes or programs. At other times, conflict between instructional and equity coaching were revealed. One equity coach described the tension between equity coaches and administrators:

"What is racial equity?" It's about disrupting existing systems. So when you are a system, it doesn't feel good to be disrupted. So, there's a lot of, "We want you doing the work, but not right here, right now asking these questions because this is our vision." (EC3)

Another equity coach described administrative resistance, saying:

Let's just say administrators in general don't want us to question those things that are quote-unquote in the administrative realm of what's in place. And, to me, that's counterproductive of my job. To me, my job is to look at not only

individuals, but looking at what the framework of what's put in place for individuals. I have to look at that...How can we say that we're really looking at racial equity when we can't question some things that impact what happens, you know, in buildings? (EC1)

A third equity coach described this resistance in schools by saying,

When things get hard, its very easy [for the administrator] to have a technical solution instead of looking at systems and beliefs and what's driving this and what transformation needs to happen in order for this to move forward instead of doing a quick technical fix. (EC7)

Another equity coach described resistance to dialogue regarding administrative decisions that conflict with racial equity work. This coach stated,

I think that's one of the things that's really stood out for me is this idea that, once a decision is made, hierarchy says the decision is made and now we go forward with it. The decision is done, and so we're not going back to it. And, how I believe real racial equity work has some pauses put in. We didn't get perspectives from our students of color, or our staff of color for that decision. (EC3)

One equity coach described the tension between instructional coaching and equity coaching in the district. As licensed teachers, equity coaches strived to increase racial consciousness for all teachers, leading to culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy. When teachers raised questions to their administrators, at times they were met with resistance, or with dismissal of the equity coach's knowledge of instruction. One equity coach described this in the following statement:

And so, what I hear from teachers is that it creates this conflict for them when they're being told to be focusing on this instructional approach. And they're looking at this instructional approach through a lens of equity because they have to do that too and they're saying that, "Well this curriculum is representative of one racial view, so what do we do here?" And they're being told, "Well, no, no, no." So, that's just one example of how they're showing up to interrupt and to question from a place of good intent, and the perception, and this has been shared, that the coaches are not instructional coaches. (EC2)

This same equity coach summarized this observation by saying,

So, we're struggling. I see us in a place where we have not yet found a way to truly weave together our instructional mandates and our racial equity focus. And so I believe it feels very disjointed and compartmentalized for our teachers. (EC2)

This is a theme that will be repeated in the next two chapters, as teachers and administrators also wondered how equity coaching and instructional coaching could work together.

In this chapter, I described the role of the equity coaches, the transformative adult learning equity coaches facilitated, and the palpable challenges equity coaches faced in their daily work. Chapter 5 illustrates teachers' perceptions of the equity coaching program.

Chapter 5

Findings from Teacher Interviews

Peer equity coaching was introduced as a pilot program at Johnson High School four years prior to this study. The year of the study was the first year that involvement with peer equity coaching was expected of all teachers in the district. Therefore, teachers had varied amounts of time and experience with their coaches and the results may reflect this variance. Considering differential exposure, I will examine how tenured teachers experienced and responded to equity coaching in Johnson Public Schools. The chapter will attend to the way in which teachers' descriptions of their experience reflect the principles of adult learning (andragogy) and coaching that were discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Impact of Equity Coaching for Teachers

Teachers reported both positive and less positive impacts of their equity coaching experiences. On the positive side, many reported that their growth was a result not only of the one-to-one peer equity coaching, but also from the on-site dialogue and training sessions led by their equity coaches. They also reported positive learning from training led by outside facilitators on district-wide staff development days.

Teachers pointed to specific outcomes, particularly personal growth in critical self-reflection that deepened their racial consciousness. Teachers shared examples of how this work with a trusted peer equity coach affected their classroom practices. They described changes in student-teacher interactions, more inclusive curriculum choices, and broader pedagogical practices. They also reported systemic changes in their schools, which include the adoption of the courageous conversations compass and protocol in

multiple meeting venues, changes and challenges to current school practices and structure, and changes in administrative behavior.

There were also several areas of concern and dissatisfaction reported by a number of teachers. These include feelings of blame or guilt, insufficient time to process their reflections in one-to-one meetings with the equity coaches, awkwardness in the shared oversight required by the alternative teacher pay model (union and administration), and unease with the evaluative potential of the equity-coaching model.

In the next section, I will report teachers' descriptions of their growth in critical self-reflection to increase racial consciousness. Second, I will describe the responsiveness to this self-reflection as observed in student-teacher interactions, curricular and pedagogical choices, and systemic shifts. Lastly, I will describe the concerns reported by teachers regarding the equity-coaching program.

Growth in racial consciousness.

All teachers were aware that the focus of equity coaching during the year of this study was writing, reflecting, and sharing discourse with the equity coach about each teacher's racial autobiography. Teachers were encouraged to think about: When did they remember first noticing race? What messages about race had they heard growing up in their homes or in their communities? What language about race had they used in the past? What might they still use or hear with family and friends? The racial autobiography was then used as both a reference and a catalyst for discourse between the equity coach and teacher throughout the year. One teacher described this as, "It's more like a push for focus on your own racial equity journey and how is that affecting

your classroom...And I hope that that shows up in my classroom, but without an equity coach seeing that...[I wouldn't know]" (T8²).

Another teacher, after writing a racial autobiography, described new perspectives on the narrowness of the teacher's social experience, saying:

But I really feel like I have a strong understanding and a concept of my racial upbringing—where I came from and how I go about things because of all the racial experiences I've had. More than anything, I think the racial autobiography pointed out the lack of interaction I have with people of color. The most interaction I have is teaching. All summer long, if I'm talking to a Black individual, going out for a night, that's probably a lot. One time throughout the summer—I bet you that's what it comes down to. So, it was more like, wow, I need to broaden my horizons a little bit. It also made me think about the things I did wrong when I was younger and with my family, not even realizing they were wrong. That's the type of perspectives thing, you know, getting a little better understanding and open mindedness that you should have. (T9)

Another teacher acknowledged being very hesitant to engage in the equity coaching model in the beginning, being raised in an environment where race was not discussed:

I was pretty resistant at first—I'll be honest—just because it [race] was something that we never talked about personally as I grew up...It was awkward at first to go through the racial autobiography process of reflecting on how you grew up...But,

² T8 references the eighth of twenty teachers quoted. All teacher references are numbered 1-20, beginning with the identifier T.

having that reflective piece helps me get a better perspective of how I lived in the world and how I view race. (T16)

These comments demonstrate how critical self-reflection was enhanced through equity coaching. All teachers described thinking about themselves as racial and cultural individuals, one of the vital components to becoming a culturally responsive teacher.

One-on-one coaching was important, but many³ teachers reported that group professional development also played a part. One teacher, for example, said,

I had a very old, White woman perspective that I was happy with because it was my perspective. But I wasn't seeing everyone's perspective, at least not in the way that really matters in the classroom. So I attribute [my change] not only to my equity coach, which I really value his coaching because one-on-one coaching is super helpful. But the professional development, it's about how all the professional development has been approached from the district down to our local stuff that has helped me to have a fuller picture of my students and what I need to do. (T18)

Shifts in frames of reference often incubated over a relatively long period of time. One teacher described returning to a book she had started the year before equity coaching. The teacher said:

I started reading it back when I taught [a different course] and I got through about half of it. And [I] picked it up about three weeks ago, and it was like I was reading it with brand new eyes...I'm going to give credit to all the stuff we've

³ The following descriptors are used to consistently identify the numbers of teachers included in a statement: A few is 2; some is 3 to 4; several is 5 to 8; many is 9 to 13; and most is 14 to 19.

been talking about and journaling and exploring and whatever. Because I just looked at it really differently. (T17)

Another teacher described a slow evolution from colorblindness to feeling guilt as a White person to naming race as a component of human interaction. The teacher stated, "It's getting out of this whole White guilt thing. You know, where you whitewash things? And that's been my biggest thing over the past couple of years is, "Oh well, I have friends who are Black and Native. And you know, they're just like me." You know what? They weren't. And it's ok to say that they're not...And so to be able to say race and to call it out and be comfortable with that. (T20)

Another teacher reflected, "I think the biggest impact for me is how I approach the students... looking within myself and how I show up, and then recognizing that that, in turn, impacts the students" (T10). This growth in critical self-reflection led to deeper racial consciousness. Naming race, seeing things through "brand new eyes" (T17), and knowing "how I show up...impacts the students" (T10) were examples of transformative learning—shifts in frames of reference—over time.

Several teachers described the way in which equity coaches reinforced the teachers' capacity to view another's frame of reference. One teacher gave the following example related to the experiences of a parent of color attending a teacher conference:

My equity coach has really instilled a perspective aspect of, "How would you feel...if you came to a table with six White people around you, questioning, having an IEP meeting, talking about the weaknesses of your child? How would you feel about that?" You know, I always try to be positive, but I just never

thought of the six White people sitting around the table. It's very intimidating.
(T9)

Overall, as the previous quote indicates, the equity coaches provided a space for teachers who operate in a fast-paced and pressured environment to reflect on what they were doing. One teacher said,

I think the best thing about having them is to be able to stop and reflect and take the time to think about how can I do things better. I think that, in my job, I'm just always on, and always on the go, go, go, go, and to really slow down and have a conversation and be intentional about how I'm addressing race and equity in my classroom and [with] teachers too is beneficial. (T5)

Another teacher summarized the work of equity coaches as, "And that's what they help you do, ask the questions that get you to your own thinking" (T20).

Teachers experienced growth in racial consciousness through peer equity coaching discourse. Their stories demonstrate the nuance of the individual teacher's life experience, their readiness for learning, and their engagement in the process of being coached. For many, learning was relatively sudden and transformative, and shifted how they viewed themselves and their students. For most, learning expanded their understanding of race and culture, guiding them to expand their perspectives. In the next section, I will share stories of transformative learning that impacted student-teacher relationships.

Transformative learning in student-teacher relationships.

Student teacher relationships and student behavior were two key areas where teachers applied their learning. Most teachers reflected about their approach to student

interactions, becoming more aware of how students might react to their interventions. Several described disorienting dilemmas—difficult interactions that caused teachers to seek out their equity coaches to dialogue about the interaction. Often, this resulted in transformative learning.

One teacher described how the equity coach provided feedback about the teacher's presence in the classroom, highlighting a common theme of the benefit of another pair of eyes. The teacher stated:

She points out a lot of things that I normally wouldn't see ... like my body position in the room, how that can affect kids in an extreme way. And I'm not purposely doing it, but knowing how it's probably being perceived is a huge issue. (T12)

Another teacher reflected about the role of teacher "power" when correcting students, saying,

You know, it's a human thing. Just be human. And try to make sure, and I've noticed that I've been doing this a lot more recently, that if I do have something to say that might be corrective or that might be constructive criticism, to be aware of the background of that individual. And try to frame it in a way that you feel, with your experience, that it will be accepted and not looked upon as an insult because I am who I am. (T14)

Most secondary teachers and a few elementary teachers became more aware of their actions through equity coaching because they recognized that students often interpret teacher actions differently from the teacher's intent. It bears repeating the Brookfield (1995b) quote from Chapter 2: "Teaching innocently means assuming that

the meanings and significance we place on our actions are the ones that *students* [emphasis added] take from them” (p. 1). Most teachers demonstrated openness to learning through dialogue with their equity coaches.

Equity coaches guided two teachers to process disorienting dilemmas, where recognition of a gap between their intentions and actions was revealed to them. In the first dilemma, the equity coach used an observation tool to tally student-teacher interactions. When the teacher looked at the tallies, the teacher described the transformative learning experience:

[The equity coach] did this tally of who I talked to, who I correct, who I reinforce, who makes a comment, whose name I use. And then she divided that up according to race and gender. And when I looked at that, I was really blown away because what I saw was different than what I thought I was doing. And I realized I have so many more interactions with White boys than I do White girls, and both males and females of color. And that changed me. Seeing the data in front of me, that completely changed me. So, it wasn't really a conversation at that point. It was just seeing the data... You can't argue with tally marks. (T10)

The tally marks revealed that the intentions of interacting equitably with all students did not match the interactions between students and the teacher in the classroom. With that knowledge, the teacher was able to consciously shift actions to match intentions.

A second teacher described how the equity coach guided the teacher to process a disorienting incident that occurred during lunchroom duty where she, a White woman, made an incorrect assumption about the actions of a Black male student. Both she and the student were embarrassed by the assumption. The teacher discussed the situation

with the equity coach, discovering implicit biases that led the teacher to make false assumptions about the actions of the Black male youth. The coach and teacher discussed options for repairing the harm and moving forward with a new awareness of those biases. The teacher met with and apologized to the student and to the small group with him at the time. She also changed her approach to lunchroom duty, saying, “We’re playing games together and having conversations together instead of me having misconceptions around the conversations they were having in the lunchroom and their behaviors...and I’m much happier” (T18). The teacher experienced embarrassment in the moment, and chose to work with the equity coach to examine the interaction and shift her frame of reference.

A third teacher shared her transformative learning process from being the authoritarian teacher she was as a new teacher to being able to navigate conflict with students. As the teacher was describing this shift, in the conversational interview, the researcher probed, “So, when is the last time a student told you to ‘f-off?’” The teacher caught her breath, paused, and described the following story:

I had a kid on Monday who almost, like he was goanna tell me to “f off”. He was. He was mad. And so, I realized that my approach before, like pre-equity coaching and pre-even looking at equity period would be, [voice gets louder, pitch is higher, speech is faster] “Are you kidding me now? What did you just say under your breath? Like, do you think you need to go to the hallway? Better yet, do you think you need to go to ISS [in-school suspension]? Like, I’m not sure what this is about. Who do you think you are?” “You’re not goanna do this in my classroom.” But, on Monday, I was like, [slower speech, voice remains level in volume and pitch] “You know what, this is what I saw. You still can’t hit her.

Maybe you need a little break. What do you think?” And he was like “rrrrr rrrr rrrr” under his breath. And, I just thought, well, I’m goanna...movin’ on. And then he went and sat over there and then I didn’t talk to him. I gave him some space, cause he was goanna tell me to “f off”. He was this close [holds thumb and first finger an inch apart]. And at the end of the day, I said, “You were about to go off. You were about to leave and you didn’t. And so, thanks for staying. I appreciate it.” And he was like, “Ok,” [looking down]. He was kind of saving face cause kids were still here. But he came back yesterday, and he was like, “I’m not trying to show off, but I was really mad yesterday. But I still stayed and I did the work.” I said, “I recognize that and I’m really proud of you, and I expect the same every day you’re here.” And so, he was like amazing yesterday. (T10)

With the researcher’s prompt, the teacher recognized the transformative learning that had, over time, created new methods for responding to students. The teacher had learned to shift *her* behavior, and the result was success for the student. Not only did the student remain in class, he completed his work, and he came back the next day proud of his accomplishment.

This teacher followed that story by sharing that the student in the story above was Black, male, and athletic. She further described that she was aware of her own implicit bias common in the United States, that Black males are violent (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013). In the moment, the transformative learning allowed her to change her behavior. She slowed down enough to assess the situation, internally name her bias, de-escalate the conflict, maintain high expectations for student conduct, and interact with the student in a way that made him “brag” about his success of staying in class and doing the work. This

teacher also said, “Truly the challenges that I’ve been presented with to grow and improve during work with my equity coach and coaches have made me fall in love with teaching again” (T10).

These stories demonstrate the transformative development of student-teacher relationships resulting from dialogue with equity coaches to engage in critical self-reflection. In the next section, I describe how teachers discussed changes in their pedagogy as a result of equity coaching and critical self-reflection.

Responsiveness in pedagogical practices.

Pedagogy refers to the art of teaching. What are the instructional methods a teacher uses to engage their students in learning? How do teachers include student voice? How do they use visual images, technology, small group instruction, read-alouds and other strategies for teaching? Almost all teachers described their consideration of how race and culture shaped classroom practices. A description regarding teachers’ learning regarding the development of culturally responsive pedagogy follows.

Most teachers reflected on methods they learned from their equity coaches in building relationships and designing student discussion. One teacher wrote a letter to the students “in order to make connections with students.” The teacher said,

One of the things I added with [the second coach] was a little bit of a racial autobiography in that letter. I made sure to talk about race and identity...So, then when students wrote back, because then students had to write a letter to me... some of them wrote about their own identity when it comes to race. (T11)

This same teacher reflected on their growth in planning student discussions. The teacher stated,

...And the professional development has helped... We talk about culturally relevant pedagogy and, you know, keep it real, keep it relevant. And I'm trying to keep it real, keep it relevant a lot more. Because I'm having more experiences and more questions. I know maybe working with the professional development and the equity coaches is helping me bring...different questions and topics to the table for discussion. (T11)

One teacher discovered, in a disorienting event, that how the teacher introduced a video might create a negative impact for students. The teacher showed a video with very little introduction, just that students might experience a conflict similar to the one in the video, and they would talk about it after viewing it. As soon as the video started, a student challenged the teacher:

“Oh, yup. Sure. This is about Hispanic people. It's goanna make Hispanic people look bad.” And I [the teacher] got defensive and was like, “Well, wait no, it doesn't matter what color, your ethnicity, or what color skin you have. We're goanna talk about this regardless.” And I remember talking to [my equity coach] and asking, “Should I not show the video? Is this bad?” And her simple answer was, “Well, why don't you ask the student?” And I was like, “Oh, yea, that's true.” So, that was the start of a big shift of, I don't have to have all the answers. And then I also [learned], it's not helpful to *not* talk about race...I just remember that as being such an “aha” moment with like, “Why am I going to books or conferences, or my administrator, or even my equity coaches, when all the answers are sitting right here in front of me and all I had to do was ask?” (T10)

The equity coach guided the teacher to two new insights or shifts in frames of reference. First, the teacher's lack of awareness regarding the perceived negative portrayal of Latino students impacted their learning. Without prefacing the video with an acknowledgement of race and the type of conflict in the video, students viewed the teacher as promoting the bias perceived toward this group. Not talking about race was not helpful. Secondly, the teacher learned that listening to student voice decreased the presence of power and increased the presence of mutual respect.

Another teacher described the importance of having conversations with students in the classroom that included racial consciousness because school was much more diverse than students' neighborhoods. The teacher stated,

Because, you know, they [White students] only know through the books. Maybe because they learn it on the history channel. So sometimes I think honestly they say that they can understand, but I'm not sure if they can feel it. [Here] they can talk and they disagree about everything about the racial conflict and discrimination. (T3)

One teacher, who was asked to be an equity observer, shared her experience of coaching a colleague. (An equity observer, described in Chapter 3, is a teacher with a demonstrated proficiency in culturally responsive teaching). The teacher presented a writing lesson regarding personal narrative, where the teacher modeled stories about their holidays and vacation. The teacher was frustrated because the students were struggling to write their own stories. The equity observer described the coaching conversation about pedagogy in the following way:

I feel like you have this idea that students of color have this deficit because they don't have the same experiences as you. And, they may have different experiences than you. You know, they're outside. They're playing. They're riding bikes. They know all of their extended family. They go to the swimming pool in the summer time. They all showed up the first day of school... Those are all experiences. And she said, "I guess I never thought of it that way..." And so I brought in six or seven picture books, multicultural picture books that were examples of personal narratives, like Native, Somali and Hispanic. She had no clue that the literature was out there. (T1)

The pedagogical shift in the teacher being coached was twofold. First, what personal narratives she shared needed to be relevant to the students in the classroom. Secondly, the teacher discovered books with personal narratives from multiple cultural and racial lenses. In addition to the shift in the teacher's frame of reference, the equity observer also developed skills in guiding others in critical self-reflection. This development of capacity within the district demonstrates systemic growth, which will be addressed more fully in the next chapter.

In Chapter 4, equity coaches observed that teachers had a fear of loss of control of the classroom. Some teachers discussed the nature of this fear, as one shared:

There was always this fear of like, "How am I going to handle it if someone veers this way and that's not what the intent was. Am I going to get a parent phone call? Is the administrator going to [support me]?" So there was always that fear of not being in control. And then, as I learned, it truly was with equity coaching that that's ok and that's part of the learning process. And I'm more of a facilitator

than a teacher having all the answers; more of like a guide. So, I think the change has been not needing to have all the control of all the information, but more guidance to bring more voices in...So, that has really been the shift, is me doing less talking. (T10)

One teacher, when asked if she teaches any differently now as a result of equity coaching broadly stated,

It all changed. I changed how much engaging talk is happening, the concreteness of when to talk and not to talk, if I allow music or not allow music. I changed how I call on students or not calling on students, the seating arrangement. (T18)

Most teachers broadened their pedagogical repertoire with increased student dialogue, more relevant connections for students, and listening to multiple perspectives. This is a dramatic shift, from thinking of students as vessels to be filled, to humans with voices to contribute and respect of their own. Many teachers, along with pedagogical shifts, described changes in curriculum as well.

Responsiveness in curriculum choices.

Culturally responsive teaching requires that teachers and administrators examine what is included in the curriculum. Whose voices are being referenced in readings? Whose stories are being told? In this section, teachers echoed the questions that equity coaches described in Chapter 4 as they developed culturally responsive curriculum. Including the teachers' comments verifies that transfer of learning occurred from equity coaches to teachers in curriculum planning.

Several teachers discussed the questions they asked themselves in revising their curriculum after equity coaching, as one teacher said,

I think it just has helped me look at things that I've done the same way for many years, [and I've] asked myself, "Why am I doing this the same?" It helps me to break down and look at the lessons, "What is it that I really want the kids to learn?" "Is the way that I'm instructing it the best way to reach my Black and Brown students? How can I make changes to make my lessons more culturally relevant?" "How can I make sure that I'm getting opportunities for those relationships with students?" (T6)

Another teacher examined the history they were teaching and noted that all of the individuals referenced in the subject area were White male. This teacher used an online forum to find forty contributors that were "Black, Brown, First Nation, GLBTQA and women" (T13) to equal the number of representatives of White men referenced in the curriculum. The teacher then worked with their students to research and tell the story of these previously untold contributors. Another teacher shared the realization that the classroom library lacks books with non-White characters or written by non-White authors and it would take time and money to change that (T2).

Another teacher focused on raising the racial consciousness of students at the secondary level, saying,

Even when we're doing a lesson of language and publicity, we talked about, "Who's being represented?" Not in America, but in Latin America, "Who's being represented in the ads?" It was mostly White people. So, this year...I've been very, very intentional to find examples about race and to have those conversations in all my lessons. (T11)

Ensuring that multiple perspectives are included was a struggle, at times. One teacher of color felt compelled to speak up with colleagues regarding their lack of a specific curriculum implementation. This teacher said,

I had a recent awareness that I would excuse my team members for not being culturally aware, or when they would put up resistance or make excuses. I used to appease them and reassure them that it was ok that they didn't know worlds beyond their own. And I realized through this equity work that I really, I wasn't helping anyone. I wasn't helping them. I wasn't being true to myself, and it was actually a disservice to our kids. And, not only to our students of color, but really to our White students. I was helping to perpetuate the cycle by not having them called to task. (T1)

The equity coach, after that difficult team meeting, guided the teachers and building instructional coordinator to process that discussion, restoring their working relationship and increasing teachers' cultural knowledge so they could confidently present the lessons.

Most teachers broadened their curriculum choices by utilizing the reflective questions the equity coaches shared in coaching sessions and team meetings. Teachers also described systemic shifts they observed as a result of peer equity coaching and the district's professional development.

Systemic Benefits as a Result of Equity Coaching Program

Several teachers discussed changes they observed beyond their classrooms. Teachers of color described feeling more supported and less isolated as a result of the equity-coaching program. Others described changes in policies, practices, and structures, while another group described shifts in organizational culture, where

constructive conversations about race and culture were becoming the norm. Each of these organizational shifts will be discussed in the following section.

Support for teachers of color.

Three of the six teachers of color included in this study felt an increased sense of safety and support due to the work of equity coaches and professional learning to develop racial consciousness in Johnson Public Schools. That deeper sense of safety allowed for richer, more comprehensive collegial conversations about curriculum, student and parent communication, and teamwork. One teacher of color described the personal impact of having an equity coach in the following way:

I think it would be the ability of the equity coach to unlock myself because that's what I bring here. So that is the biggest thing for me because, for your whole life, you kind of stuff all that. And so, for somebody to unlock that and cause me to feel safe about it and to help me know how to bring it here. It's been a slow journey of three years. (T2)

This teacher now engages in discussions that include race:

Clearly people see me as a non-White person, for me to have brought up issues about non-whiteness would have been just that, in isolation. And now I feel I have the backing and the support so it's not just me crying for my own cause. Do you see what I'm saying? So that's huge. That's a very huge thing. Because I understand how it works. I understand what it's like to be the not Black, the not White, the only one that's like me in a building for how many years and how long...? I get it. But I think for that reason alone, I think it's [equity coaching] a great thing. (T2)

At first reading, this might be described as exclusively personal transformative learning. However, the impact upon the local system was also transformative. The teacher of color described a time after equity coaching began, that the teacher asked their White colleagues to respond to a parent inquiry regarding classroom parties. The team responded together to the parent question because, the teacher said,

“If I bring it up [by myself], then it’s all about me and my agenda as a non-White person...” And it took a minute for him [my colleague] to get that. And when he finally got that, he was like, “Oh my gosh. I finally get it. I can do it, and you can follow me, but you can’t do it because you’re the one that is [ruining everybody else’s festival].” [And I said], “Right...” I wouldn’t have been able to express the same thing five years ago and have a hope of *anybody* understanding that. (T2)

This was transformative learning as a team.

Another teacher of color described the importance of having a coach of color for support. The teacher said,

And, so my coach is also a person of color, so that was important because, just through their coaching process, it felt like I wasn’t alone. I wasn’t isolated; that my feelings were validated, that I wasn’t crazy, that it was a safe space. And then learning how to come to terms with the micro-aggressions that my teammates exhibit constantly and the reasons behind that, and being ok and learning how to forgive them for it instead of being resentful or angry. (T1)

This teacher then described a conference with the equity coach when a student of color came into the room for some guidance. The teacher described how this provided an additional validating experience with the equity coach. The teacher shared:

And, so in the back of my mind, I've always worried about whether or not I was trying to teach my kids of color how to stay safe, but then am I suppressing their identity in the process? So, having them [the coaches] listen to a couple of my conversations with children of color when they've come in from recess or even when they're coming from [another] grade to come back to me to talk to me. Or they'll ask to work in here because they can't handle their classroom and they need a break...Having another perspective to assess the conversations and the interactions that I'm having with my kids of color and having them validate that I was doing fine by them as a teacher [was helpful]. (T1)

One bilingual teacher of color stated, “[My coach] knows the content. She understands [the language], she understands the culture, and she knows the students. So to have somebody observe me who can connect with me as a teacher at all levels, for me that is priceless” (T11).

For teachers of color, having equity coaches created the necessary support to name their concerns, share their experiences, and be validated. This, in turn, deepened intercultural collegial conversations in local teams, schools, and across the district. These are shifts in frames of reference for individuals who connected with their equity coaches and local teams to create localized system benefits within the organization.

Trusting relationships.

As described in chapter two, peer coaching is developed and sustained through trusting relationships (Cornett & Knight, 2009), and the capacity for organizational learning is increased through reflective dialogue, de-privatized practice, and shared responsibility, where trust and respect among teachers is the norm (Louis & Lee, 2016).

Like teachers of color in the previous section who felt safer and more support to engage systemically in discussions about race and culture, so too did teachers with trusting equity coaching relationships.

Seven teachers described trusting relationships with their equity coaches, where they felt they could be honest and open. Some stated this was because of the confidential nature of their relationship, which allowed the teacher to work through their frustrations, their mistakes, and their questions. Some also described the *peer* relationship as a critical element in developing trust:

And I think I was avoiding it mainly out of fear. Like...are you going to see that I'm not calling on somebody or I'm not being equitable? I guess that's a deep-seated fear that I have, because it would be completely unintentional...At least with the equity coaches that are around, because we're really peers, it's not like somebody who's a superior. That might be different. I'm just thinking that because I know them better and I know what their intention is, I value their opinion more than I fear it. (T17)

This quote speaks explicitly about what is implied in many of the other statements by teachers. They could take disorienting dilemmas to their equity coaches and work through the conflict, the mistake, and the question. And they could work together to shift their understanding to transform their practice through this trusting relationship. Many teachers reported this type of trusting dialogue at team meetings and at school-wide professional learning sessions, thus impacting systemic shifts in learning.

Organizational culture and constructive conversations.

Most teachers noted changes in the culture and practices of the district and that conversations about race and culture that occurred in team meetings, staff meetings, and across the district were increasingly honest and accepted. Equity coaches, teachers, and administrators used the compass to guide the dialogue, creating a framework for the discussions. Some of these conversations led to changes in policies and practices.

One teacher discussed how race is part of many of the conversations and decisions, stating:

And that's ok because it makes it so easy to talk about race. And it really is, where it was always underlying, but it was never part of the conversation, and now it's always part of the conversation. When we look at data, it's always part of the conversation, "How did the Hispanic kids do?" Now, it's part of the discussion. "Am I sending out this kid?" "Am I recognizing the Black kids more than the White kids?"...And once you recognize it and put a name on it, then you can work at changing the discrepancies. (T20)

Another teacher said, "The conversations and the dialogues we have here this year are the best I've ever had anywhere. They've been very, very good" (T9).

One teacher noted that, along with more dialogue among the teachers, that there is also more administrative leadership modeling the conversations:

I feel like there's more conversation. I think people, I don't know if they were afraid to talk about it before or what the barrier was, but there's more conversation across the board, both with kids and between teachers and with [the principal] too. You know, he refers to the compass a lot when he does

professional development or training, or even one on one conversations. I've had him pull out the compass and say, "Where are you at?" And he does the same. He models it. I guess I can see that there's been a change there." (T5)

Four of the teachers described the movement they were seeing across the district. One described the connection between equity coaching and the professional learning the district has been doing over many years. This teacher stated,

...it's hard to distinguish between the impact of an equity coach and the impact of ...our district's...racial lens. But, they [the equity coaches] help a lot. They do a very nice job with helping people reflect on their own. They bring in the Courageous Conversations (Singleton & Linton, 2006). They help define where you're approaching it, and help with ideas. And really for a person like me who's older, they do a very, very nice job of asking direct questions and getting me to reflect. (T20)

Another teacher also emphasized the importance of the district-wide commitment to racial equity, by stating,

And I also serve on the district staff development committee and I know that when they gather all fifty of us together and say, "Let's plan something," that this is the forefront, the [racial equity] sort of work...So it's not ever void of that. (T18)

A teacher, who returned to the district after a leave, noticed a big shift in the depth of collegial conversation. In the first staff meeting upon return, the teacher thought, "'Whoa, everybody else is on board already,' in terms of those kinds of difficult discussions. I could see that they've been doing the work" (T6). Another teacher

connected the individual, personal growth in cultural awareness to the work of the district, saying,

So, it's a lot to fix and a lot to adjust. And, it won't ever be perfect, and there's a lot we could do better. And, you know, my cultural awareness of my students is a piece of that, but it's not [all of it]. There's a lot more to it than just me and the students. But, what can we impact change on? And that's kind of our professional development approach. What can we impact change on? Me. (T14)

In sum, teachers described the shift in the organizational culture of the district to one that systematically named race and culture in discussions and decision-making. Examples of teachers' policies and practices that resulted from this shift are described in the next section.

Shifts in policies, practices, and school structure.

Several teachers identified policies, practices, or structures that had been changed or were identified as barriers as a result of equity coaching and the district's professional learning centered in developing greater equity. One teacher reported changes in grading practices in the department, saying,

Homework is not a big part of what I assess because I found that many of my students who weren't passing were doing so because of homework. So we've gone to, I've pushed it through to my department, but we're an 80:20. Eighty [percent of the grade is] on assessment, however you define assessment, and you do that work, and twenty on the homework. Well, I've found that has assisted a lot of our students who typically did not do homework. Because, what we are truly supposed to be assessing is growth and what they've learned. (T14)

Three teachers described how the structure and the schedule of Johnson Public Schools established inequities for student outcomes. At the middle and high school, teachers noted only a few students of color enrolled in the advanced Spanish, advanced math, and honors courses. One teacher described a female student of color actually dropped an advanced placement math class because no peers from her race or culture were present. She didn't want to be the only student of color in the course.

An effort to integrate classes within the school by eliminating support classes whose enrollment was mostly Black and Brown students saw some success. However, one teacher noted that the honors classes are still mostly White. The teacher described how the structure prohibits further inclusion, stating, "Well the schedule drives when kids can take a class, so it didn't change anything really." (T14)

Additionally, because one of the four elementary schools was an immersion program, only students who participated throughout elementary and middle school could take the advanced language coursework at the high school. This meant that, if parents did not register for the lottery in kindergarten, their child would not have access to the advanced language courses. In addition, bilingual speaking students who moved into the district had limited options to develop their literacy skills in the language. Discussions were taking place throughout the district to shift that trajectory at the elementary and middle levels. How was the district recruiting parents of color to choose the immersion program? How were middle school teachers identifying students for higher-level math courses? And, what messages were teachers conveying implicitly regarding expectation?

In the first sections of Chapter 5, I have identified the benefits of peer equity coaching as described by teachers. These were the increase in critical self-reflection and

discourse, increased racial consciousness, culturally responsive student-teacher interactions, and expanded pedagogical and curriculum choices. Teachers also described shifts in the organizational culture, with trusting relationships between equity coaches and teachers, with more support for teachers of color leading to more culturally responsive dialogue across the district. This led to some shifts in policies and practices and identifying other barriers. There were also areas of concern identified by teachers, which will be discussed next.

Areas of Concern

Teachers expressed concerns about equity coaching in four areas. First, there was concern about the limited opportunity for interaction between teacher and equity coach. Second, teachers expressed a desire for more applicable strategies to accompany their increased racial and cultural awareness. Third, some teachers felt guilt or defensiveness while attending trainings or being coached. And fourth, teachers wondered how results were being measured, and whether the results were worth the cost, especially since it was co-funded through the teachers' union. Each of these concerns will be described in the next section with teachers' summary comments to complete this chapter.

Limited opportunity for interaction.

The alternative teacher professional pay (ATPPS) model of peer equity coaching in Johnson Public Schools required that each teacher participate in three peer observations annually with two different observers. Therefore, equity coaches and teachers were required to only meet twice annually for a pre-observation conference, an observation of the teacher's classroom, and a post-conference. Equity coaches were

available for questions via email, drop-in conversations, and appointments. Half of the teachers interviewed expressed concern with a lack of one-to-one interaction with the equity coaches. The concerns were expressed in three primary ways.

Several teachers attributed the lack of interaction to the number of teachers each coach was assigned along with the additional duties of the position. One teacher stated,

I wish I had more contact with my equity coach because I feel like that one-on-one conversation would be very powerful...I feel like they've got a lot on their plates and a lot of meetings and a lot of stuff going on. (T6)

Another teacher said,

I wish we could meet with them more, not just for our formal observation, pre- and post-, and then that's it. I don't go to them because I think they have a lot of teachers on their cases. So, I just wish we could meet more to talk about things.

But, otherwise, it's just paperwork. (T11)

This sentiment was the impetus for the original equity coaches to start the equity coaching program—to provide meaningful feedback and not just complete paperwork. A third teacher said, “I have to say I feel like most of the impact has really come from our whole group sessions that [our equity coaches] lead, mostly because that's the most time I get with [my coach]” (T4). Clearly, teachers wanted more individual time with their equity coaches, but felt the coaches were too busy to accommodate that request.

Three teachers more critically expressed their concerns, wondering why they did not have easier access to their equity coach. One teacher stated,

I just don't think our equity coach is around as much as most of us would hope that she's around and helping us as much as we feel she could be helping. Like,

there's a lot of time outside the building that teachers don't know what's happening and where she's at. We don't know if that's her choice or district choice. But I think we were all hoping, that as an equity coach, she'd be here. Especially since there's one for our building, that we would see her a lot helping classrooms. (T8)

Three teachers expressed their concern with the lack of support they received the day after the presidential election. Teachers reported that both they and their students were afraid, upset, and really needed help guiding their students to process their concerns. Several students in the teachers' classes were Muslim students, immigrant students, or were friends of students from these two cultural groups, and the results of the election frightened them.

One teacher described a conversation with the equity coach after the presidential election. The teacher described the grief, disbelief, and fear the adult and the students experienced that day. The teacher expressed disappointment that neither the equity coach nor the principal pulled together all the teachers to discuss how they might guide their students. The teacher was further disappointed to hear that the equity coaches had gathered that morning to support one another to process their own concerns. In reflecting about this, the teacher said,

I was really taken back by that...I understood why they needed to be there for each other. But I felt like you guys [the equity coaches] should have all been at your buildings, your home-base sights talking with teachers; talking about what does that look like in your classrooms; what...conversations...would be

appropriate at this level versus this level. And, honestly be here for kids who maybe needed some honest to God counseling. Because it was dreary here. (T4)

The teacher continued, questioning what equity coaches did with their time, especially when the context outside the school was so politically and socially stressful, saying,

I think stuff like that has made people question, “Who are you guys here for?” ...Who are you here to benefit? Are you here to benefit the teachers to then benefit the kids? Or are you here to be each other’s support group?” I think that’s kind of unfortunately where this year’s kind of gone. (T4)

This teacher was also concerned that the equity coaches’ caseloads were too large, resulting in a “thin” coaching program. This teacher said, “Because now I feel like we’re just saying, “Yes, everybody has an equity coach.” But, what does that mean?” (T4).

Teachers clearly desire the guidance and support of the equity coaches, as described in the stories above. This was their first area of concern. A second concern of teachers was the unmet desire for applicable strategies to develop relationships, expand culturally responsive pedagogy, and develop inclusive curriculum in their classrooms.

Desire for applicable strategies

Several teachers desired specific strategies to apply their developing racial consciousness to the classroom. One teacher stated, “Because sometimes we go to these seminars and we say that’s a lot of information, but what can I do? What is the next step? What do I need to do as the next step?” (T3). Another teacher expressed a similar sentiment, saying,

I feel like I’m at a point where I feel like know a lot of my biases and where I’m coming from and I need some help with the action. I need some ideas, like, where

can I, if I want to help with math; math is not equitable at all...I don't know how to do math any differently. So, I think that's where I'm stuck. I can do as much as I know how to do. (T8)

Another teacher made a similar statement, more critically questioning the value of personal equity journeys. This teacher stated,

We've focused a lot on our personal equity journeys, and developing like a racial autobiography. So we've got a good basis of where we've come from, but that hasn't helped us. Well, I shouldn't say us. It hasn't helped me how I want it to help me. (T16)

One teacher described a consultant's dismissal of this type of request. One of the district's outside consultants attended a professional development steering committee meeting during which the subject of applicable strategies was raised. A teacher who attended that meeting shared this reflection:

And so, something that [the consultant] said to our steering committee...was, "Those who are really struggling and wanting technical solutions to what they're facing have not yet transformed." I would hate to hear that if I was begging for technical solutions. So at that moment I was like, "Oh good, I'm glad I wasn't begging for technical solutions right now." So, I think we have staff who have not yet transformed, don't care to, and don't see a need despite the professional development that's been offered that should soften any heart and mind that I've ever seen. So, that puzzles me. (T18)

The response of the consultant appears to presume that the teachers asking for strategies have not developed racial consciousness, and that teachers with some racial

consciousness have the pedagogical strategies, curricular knowledge, and socio-political frames of reference they need to serve all students well. The response of the teacher in this story demonstrates that it may not feel safe for teachers to ask for strategies to apply their growing racial consciousness lest they be identified as “not yet transformed.” Conversely, it could be that the call for strategies is an attempt to avoid critical self-reflection. The danger is in assuming the teacher’s position in the request. As presented in Chapter 2, the presence of social, emotional, and physical safety must be met before any cognitive learning can occur, and this statement would not meet that need.

Guilt and defensiveness.

Three teachers described their feelings of discomfort, guilt, or defensiveness either with an equity coach or the consulting organization, resulting in disengagement from the learning. Two teachers described responding defensively to one equity coach’s prompts. One teacher said,

I was used to the year before, “Hey I noticed that when X got the answer wrong, a little Brown boy, you asked a little White boy. Did you notice that you did that?” And I was like, “No.” And she was like, “Here’s why you might not want to do this.” And I was like, “I never even thought of that.” Whereas last year [my equity coach would say], “You called on little Brown boy, then White boy. *Why’d you do that?*” And I’m thinking as a teacher, “Um, because he had his hand up? He wanted to share an answer?” I mean like, “What do you mean, ‘Why’d I do that?’ I was just trying to find an answer. Because I don’t know what you’re asking me. What do you mean?” And that’s how I felt kind of all last year. I felt like it was

trying to make me become defensive and to push me, not to open up but to push me where I was getting mad. (T8)

The questions from the two equity coaches seemed to be similar, but one coach fostered trust and the other defensiveness, effectively shutting down the teacher's reflection.

Two teachers described their reactions to daylong seminars with the consulting organization. One teacher said:

[On the] drive home, I'm feeling a little guilty here that I'm White. And I think, "Is that productive?" I mean, I get that, but I don't need to be driving home feeling bad. But, maybe it's the coaching. I want solutions. And, I just don't feel there are a lot of solutions in all this whole racial equity work that we're doing. Yes, I get it. I've been to all these seminars. Now, help me out. Tell me what I can do to connect with my Black males. Give me another suggestion besides building relationships and holding high standards that I can do for these kids. (T15)

Similarly, another teacher stated, "With [the consulting organization] I feel intense guilt for being a White teacher. That's the biggest thing I've gotten out of it—that I suck. And it's my fault. That's what I feel. And because of that, I kind of have a little bit of disdain" (T14).

Can one have a little bit of disdain? These teachers' comments are significant in that they demonstrate the consulting organization, Pacific Educational Group, had not met the conditions necessary for adults to learn. In these three examples, it could be that the teacher as adult learner either was not ready to learn, did not feel that the training would improve their situation, or did not feel their prior knowledge was being validated.

Or they did not feel personally or socially safe being who they were with the set of skills and understanding they possess. Learning—the cognitive function of the brain—will not engage without social and emotional safety, and this response was expressed in the comments above.

What's the value?

Three teachers shared concerns about the value of the equity-coaching program. Was it worth the cost? How was the district measuring effectiveness? And was the district utilizing the equity coaches in a way that impacted their teachers in the deepest, broadest way possible? One teacher wondered how a teacher's cultural responsiveness impacted student achievement. This teacher offered the following reflection:

And, I think there are teachers here that their cultural awareness and their cultural competency I deem as being greater than mine. But, I'm not willing to say that their efficacy is greater than mine. But, I don't know. We don't have data points to measure these things. It's all gut feel...But, I think, I'm not sure that all the efforts that we make lead to academic growth or knowledge gain. (T14)

A second teacher discussed the success their grade level had in closing the attainment gap in student test scores prior to the onset of equity coaching:

None of us had equity coaches when that started. And it's happened. So, I think that the training and the PD (professional development) we've had in equity has helped, but I really accredit it to...our [grade level] coach and also our curriculum that we are all working from at this point. (T7)

The adoption of the new curriculum with instructional coaches speaks to the strength of coaching as successful professional training program. This was noted in Chapter 2 in

addition to this teacher's comments. What would be the outcomes from equity coaching district-wide?

One teacher described how the union monitored the equity coaching program for value since it financially supported the program, saying, "the union wants to make sure that we've invested wisely" (T16). Another teacher, who was knowledgeable about the funding of the program from the teachers' union stated,

The problem though is that it's so expensive that our ATPPS [alternative teacher professional pay system] money can only sustain it at the level right now— ATPPS is paying for five coaches, their salaries and benefits—for only one and a half more years. And my hope, and I think everybody's hope is that we'd be able to get some other funding to sustain that. (T7)

Teachers clearly supported the equity-coaching model, but also wanted to ensure the union's return on their investment was achieved. This corroborates statements made by the equity coaches in Chapter 4 about feeling monitored by teachers in their schools.

Teachers' summary comments.

In this chapter, I provided tenured teachers' observations and reflections regarding the equity-coaching program. Overall, ninety percent of the teachers explicitly stated that they would like the equity coaching program to continue in Johnson Public Schools. Seventy-two percent enthusiastically supported the continuation of equity coaching. Several suggested adjustments to the program, and no teacher suggested that it be discontinued. The range of endorsements can be seen in the following comments.

One teacher said, "I think it's an outstanding model and I'm very grateful that my district has put it into place. It gives me a framework to be a better teacher, and a better

professional, and a better human because of it” (T18). Another said, “I just think its’ a great idea and I just want to see it succeed, but I think we just got to pull it together a little bit more” (T7). One teacher described both the value of coaching and the time it requires to shift behaviors:

If you get the right coach to nudge you along, then...whatever it is that the person is meant to learn goes that much better...I think there are people who are still not ready for it and that’s going to cause a deeper divide amongst the staff. I think that it’s always going to be tough to marry that timing of relationships and the connections...with the, “Ok we have to do this according to...this American society time schedule.” That’s always going to be an issue. (T2)

The teacher understood that success of the equity-coaching program would be built upon two things—having the “right” coach for the teacher, and having enough time.

In this chapter, I have reported teachers’ stories of how equity coaching affected personal growth, classroom practices, and school cultures. In addition, I noted the concerns teachers had in response to equity coaching. Even though many teachers pointed to areas of improvement, ninety percent of the teachers interviewed hoped that equity coaching would continue in the district, and be improved by responding to their concerns. But sustaining the program also requires administrative support, and Chapter 6 will examine administrators’ perceptions of the equity-coaching program.

Chapter 6

Findings School and District Administrators

The findings in Chapters 4 and 5 addressed the first question of this study regarding the nature of a peer equity coaching and its relationship to transformative adult learning. In Chapter 6, the findings from administrator interviews inform the first question as well, but also address the second and third questions of the study, probing the nature of administrative leadership to foster organizational learning and systemic change through peer equity coaching.

Leithwood et al. (2004) describe the significance of school leadership in a child's education. Similarly, Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis (2016) describe the importance of the building principal and district leaders in implementing culturally responsive organizational learning:

Research suggests that unless promoted by the principal, implementation of cultural responsiveness can run the risk of being disjointed or short-lived in a school; and conversely, district-level mandates are only effective to the extent they are locally enforced. (p. 3)

Administrators in Johnson Public Schools promoted and supported equity coaching. Their observations and descriptions of organizational learning will be described in this chapter.

Five school principals, two assistant principals and four district administrators were the third group interviewed for this study. For confidentiality purposes, building administrators are described in the study as principals and district administrators as

administrators. The chapter begins with a brief description of the current context of equity coaching as described by administrators followed by their observations in three key areas: (a) shifts in behaviors, processes and structures, and parent or guardian relationships, (b) the development of administrators' culturally responsive leadership through critical self-reflection, and (c) organizational learning.

Context as Described by Administrators

Administrators and principals universally supported equity coaching, though there were varied opinions and observations about its implementation. Six of the eight principals participated in their own equity coaching program with a local university, providing an intimate understanding of and appreciation for the equity coaching process. Some principals met regularly with their equity coaches and some did not. Most principals participated in staff trainings presented by equity coaches. All administrators spoke about the changes in school and district climate after peer equity coaching was implemented.

Development of equity coaching.

Administrators and principals had a unique view regarding the development of equity coaching in Johnson Public Schools. Building and district administrators worked with the teachers' union in the development of equity coaching, though it was largely teacher driven. The peer equity coaching design, as one principal stated, was for each ...coaching session to be personal, saying, "What is it that you need? What is it that you're struggling with?" And...figuring out if what we're doing right now isn't working, then how can we do things differently? (A1)

This principal further described the peer equity coaching during the initial three years of the model in the following way:

I really believe that when the model was created and equity coaching was conceived, it was truly about coaching. And it was really about meeting staff where they were, meeting people where they were. And, if I was your coach and for you it was a personal journey about whatever, we could just sit and have conversations. If it was more concrete and I needed help, I could say, “Here’s my lesson plan. Can you help me make it more culturally responsive?” (A1)

Equity coaching in the first three years was teacher led and coach supported, with limited district direction in the process.

The transition.

With district-wide adoption in the fourth year, the equity coaching team and administrators created a plan to bridge the wide range of experiences teachers had regarding racial consciousness and culturally responsive teaching. One district administrator described the transition as shifting the focus away from students and toward teacher self-reflection about race. The equity coaching team assessed the participation of teachers in each building, and created a plan for each building to reach a common ground. Ground zero was having all teachers write and present their racial autobiographies in small groups, and achieving some level of proficiency using the Courageous Conversations About Race compass and protocol from Pacific Educational Group (Singleton & Lipton, 2006). This would be achieved through equity coaching as well as presenting common professional learning facilitated by equity coaches in the

buildings where they were assigned. One district administrator described the intention of coaching in its fourth year, saying:

What we're trying to do is help people with, when you're looking at the [Courageous Conversations] compass and you're looking at the difference between thinking and acting. We're trying to help [you] touch on that believing and the moral part of the compass. (A5)

Another district administrator also described the difference between the early years and current district-driven work as shifting the emphasis from coaching relationships to racial equity (A4). The shift to the district-wide and mandated work reflected divergent perspectives regarding the nature of equity coaching. Could equity coaching be teacher-coach working together to set goals in developing racial consciousness and culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy? Or would equity coaching be district-led as the process to develop racial consciousness with the district setting the agenda?

The district initiative created a new environment at the building level, which created a different kind of awareness among building administrators. One principal described the challenges:

People are in different places, so it can become more challenging from a professional development standpoint. Because you have some people who are... doing this work in their classrooms...they're handing out the protocol to kids, saying, "This is the protocol we use to talk about race in this classroom. And then you have some [other] people, you know, that are, "I'm White? White's a race?" (A2)

Resistance.

Perhaps not surprisingly, nine of the administrators indicated that the expansion and requirement to participate created resistance. One principal described seeing a cluster of perceivably resistant teachers at the back of the auditorium on a district-wide development day led by a consultant. The principal said, “[They were seated in] the last row of the auditorium. (Shows a posture of arms crossed, slouched, and jaw set)...I knew exactly what they were doing: “Try and teach me!” (A7). This anecdote is reminiscent from the previous chapter where two teachers described their feelings of blame and guilt for being White men when attending training with Pacific Educational Group.

Most administrators, however, described resistant teachers in their buildings as outliers, in the minority, or, “down to less than a handful that still question doing this stuff...or I don’t need this, or it’s not really that important” (A9). Even with limited overt resistance, one administrator noted that peer equity coaching and professional development to develop culturally responsive teachers could be divisive. The administrator said,

Because there are sides in this. There are people who believe this is the only thing we should be doing. And there are people that believe, “This is the seventh one I’ve gone to now. Do I need to go to the eighth one?” (A3)

Another principal described the challenges of supporting both the teachers who were deeply committed, as well as those who were “so far in the uncomfortable zone ...that they don’t alienate themselves from their peers” (A8).

While they were committed to supporting teachers, some principals also voiced concerns about the changes in the peer equity coaching model. Some principals

questioned the effectiveness of the model as it became more aligned and systemic and the district equity coaching team was formed. One principal stated,

This is the first year I hear myself shifting and saying, “Alright, what are our equity coaches doing? Why are they gone every single Friday for half the day so that they can all meet together?” And I know they need that collegiality and I know that there [are] all those different pieces, but there is a divide. (A1)

This principal noted a decrease in the number of references teachers made to their equity coaching conversations, saying,

I don’t hear, as I’m talking to staff, them saying, “Oh, my equity coach gave me this the last time I was meeting with them.” Now I get nothing. And so, I don’t know...It’s just different and it *feels* different. (A1)

Others questioned whether, with new district requirements, the equity coaches were pushing teachers harder than they were ready to go. Were teachers receiving the coaching they thought they wanted? Or was it what the district wanted them to get? One administrator said, “And, I think it’s gone...too PEG [Pacific Educational Group], too protocol, too much about knowing the protocol and being on the compass and figuring out those parts of it” (A1).

As described in the previous chapter, some teachers were resistant to the new mandated model of equity coaching and some administrators, while supportive of equity coaching, concurred. At the same time, administrators reported multiple positive results, described in the next section.

Transformative Learning and Organizational Change

Administrators described changes in teacher behavior, in procedures and structures within schools and across the district, and in their relationships with parents. Many of these demonstrated a shift in the adults' perspectives. Some led to shifts in a team's decisions.

Shifts in behavior and culture.

Every administrator described significant changes in teacher behavior that affected the building climate or culture of the staff. One principal said,

I can remember when people started the racial equity journey. It was still about how we were going to transform children... In the last three to four years, we have made this "aha" that it's not about that. It is all about me... "Where am I in my own racial experience and how does that look?" And, "This is the child's school and they're not changing. Nor should they change." (A8)

Leading a racial equity journey, according to several administrators and principals, required personal, transformative learning for administrators as part of a shift in culture:

And when I look at my journey, I silenced myself for so long... because of a system that was not [inclusive] for me, but I didn't have the words for it. And now that I know, I'm trying to make sure that those around me use their voice to break down the silos or break down the system. I see teachers now using [their voices] in very powerful ways for our students, and that's what we need. (A5)

Another principal described the change in culture as “normalizing” the capacity to discuss and confront inequities, saying, “I don’t know if it’s fast enough for the amount of money we’re spending on it. But it is happening ... So, I’m optimistic” (A7).

A third principal agreed, describing a gradual shift in the types of discussions observed since equity coaching began. A first stage was to openly mention race, but then “we started to talk about, really get into the personal, the emotional, and intellectual because we were examining what is race, and what has it meant over the years” (A10). Even more fundamental was when the teachers began questioning implicit assumptions about race and racial beliefs. This principal also noted that the culture was still shifting because “we’re still seeing some sacred areas that people just can’t give up” (A10).

Shifts in structures, processes, and procedures.

School and district leaders described the influence of equity coaches on decision-making discussions in department and building leadership team meetings. Several administrators described shifts in processes and systems as teams examined these for equitable access and engagement.

One principal described three major changes as a result of critical questions voiced by the leadership team and administrators. The first involved the student council, where teachers were encouraged to discuss their long tradition of having a seven-member student council, and the purpose of the council. This led to the insight that the council was fostering leadership for seven of the school’s six hundred students. The team began to ask more questions such as, “Who really represents student council and why does it look that way?” They concluded that the selection process, based upon students’ speeches, privileged students who had access to parent support and coaching. The result

was a redesign to create greater and more equitable opportunity, shifting from a seven member student council to a monthly student leadership team of one or two classroom representatives who worked on a particular leadership task for the school (A8). Team members and the administrator took action because of the deep layers of discussion to understand implicit bias, systemic barriers, and White privilege, and committed to developing seventy young leaders rather than seven.

In the same school, teachers and the administrator transformed parent teacher conferences. Teachers were allotted sixteen contract hours to arrange conferences with families at times and locations convenient to the families. The administrator stated that teachers would reach out to parents and guardians with an invitation to meet such as, “Could you tell me some of the things you want to cover and then I’ll bring you the things that I want to cover” (A8). The principal went on to describe how and why they changed the structure of conferences, saying,

In the fall, family connect time it is all about...developing the relationship. It’s about me understanding what family means in your life and how we’re going to communicate throughout the year. And so, we literally blew up a structure. And when I say...how [does] that impact the child? [I] truly believe that the child received a much better experience in the classroom because our relationship to the family is so much stronger. (A8)

A third shift in practice within this school occurred with the decision made by their building leadership team to adopt building goals for student attainment that were broader than the district’s focus on academic growth for Black students:

And so, that was a pivotal point, and that came from [one of our teachers of color]...Just her saying at that moment, “I am fearful that you are not going to look at [our] five Native students because we’re going to set a Black student goal.” And so it’s been huge for us...as a building...we need [this teacher of color’s] voice. We need [multiple] voices going forward. (A8)

Along with the adoption of attainment goals for all students, Black students, and students of color, the principal provided all teachers with data on their students’ growth for all students and each group of students for that year along with a cumulative report of students’ growth for each year they taught in the building. The administrator described the growth in student scores, saying,

When I first started quarterly monitoring typical growth, I would get teachers who were getting like .6 of a year’s [growth]. And I would say, “Oh, we’re way falling short...You need to be pushing them beyond a year, and now we’ve actually started to close the gap. So, we have a number of teachers in our building that are closing the gap that are beyond one hundred percent. (A8)

The principal went on to note that teachers could share that growth information with their equity coaches and say, “This is where I need help with my students of color” (A8).

Transformative leadership, equity coaching, and professional learning to develop cultural responsiveness aligned to create cultural change as a school community.

Individual voices contributed and shaped the policies and practices of the school and parent voices were viewed as critical to their children’s learning.

Shifts to organizational processes and structures occurred in other schools as well. One administrator described changes to the high school course registration process that

included the removal of admission requirements to Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) classes, allowing students and their families to choose the classes. In addition, teachers and administrators actively recruited and supported students of color once they were enrolled. The administrator said,

Our AP and IB classes...are ten times more diverse than [they were] ten years ago. And we are not going to just put kids in AP classes to say that we did it...We are going to take away barriers so more students of color get to those classes and we're going to prepare them better earlier, and inform them, and take away barriers, and recruit them. (A3)

To further break down barriers to access, administrators changed the schedule so that students could take a single AP or IB course rather than a block of three—science, social studies, and English classes—that had been required. This change created resistance because it required “old honors teachers to actually care about kids who aren’t [traditional] honors kids...And the data from this year is not as good as it was in the past, but it’s worth it...because it’s the right thing to do. (A3)

Along with shifts in scheduling and course registration, several school leaders made changes to professional learning for teachers who struggled with students’ behavior. One administrator described part of this professional learning was guiding teachers to be self-reflective by asking, “And when you’re getting ready to send a student out to the behavior room, where are you on the [Courageous Conversations] compass right now?” (A5). This administrator went on to note that the tools provided by the district’s equity initiatives make sense, “And that’s what I always tell other people: ‘Now that I understand how to use them, this is what we’re using them for’” (A5).

These changes in practices were shifting the experience for students and teachers alike. The belief was that, the more the teachers were able to slow down their responses and use the compass for self-reflection, fewer students would be dismissed from class.

The shifts in processes, practices, and structures implemented at each of these schools changed some administrator's perceptions of their role in creating learning environments. One principal summarized their own leadership development, noting that,

I think the older I become, the wiser I become, is that my benefit in life is that I can impact the structures. And I can implement change that is going to make that experience all the way down to the classroom level that is going to make that experience a much better experience. (A8)

Shifts in parent relationships.

Beyond structural changes and shifts in teacher behavior and practices, several administrators described personal growth in their interactions with parents and guardians. One principal described a conference among a teacher, a parent who felt insulted by the teacher, and the grandmother. After planning the conference with the equity coach, the principal used the protocol and the compass from Pacific Educational Group (PEG) as a tool to guide the discussion, the same process teachers were practicing with their equity coaches. All participants described their perspectives, clarified their intentions, and the teacher understood how her word choice was insulting to the parent. All attributed the success of the conversation to using the protocol. The principal added, "I don't hesitate to explain this [compass] as a tool, as a strategy...It's just a way of organizing people in a way to feel like they're being heard, instead of being talked to" (A9).

Another principal described a transformative moment using the compass in interactions with parents:

I had a mind-shift...when I realized that often Black moms, when they came into my office, they were...in the emotional quadrant. And I, as a guy, who tends to start [in the thinking quadrant], was not having much success [in the conversation]. It really caused me to think about myself, and even calling out race, saying, “Ok, I’m a White guy. I’m trying. I don’t know the whole story. I don’t know your story, but I’d like to hear it.” (A11)

This same principal co-led a monthly training for parents in raising racially conscious children. The principal described a transformative moment when a Black father shared that the monthly meetings changed his life, not realizing there was research out there about how Black people are treated. So, by going there and knowing that I [the father] have a voice in this conversation, it’s changed my life. And it’s changed how I view myself. And I want to study these things and become a better dad and a better person. (A11)

The principal realized that, even though it seemed change wasn’t occurring fast enough, “it’s those moments where you step back and go, ‘But we’re making it better for this generation’”(A11).

Development of Administrators’ Cultural Responsiveness

Just as teachers developed skills in critical self-reflection to teach with cultural responsiveness, administrators developed skills in culturally responsive leadership to support and sustain the work of teachers and their equity coaches. (Brown, 2006; Cooper, 2009; Gay, 2010a; Goldenberg, 2014; Howard, 1999; Khalifa, Gooden & Davis,

2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Singleton & Lipton, 2006; Sleeter, 2001). In the following section, I present administrators' descriptions of their own growth in critical self-reflection.

Personal growth for administrators.

Each of the administrators discussed their personal growth to develop racial consciousness and culturally responsive leadership. Six principals had equity coaches as they participated in a local university's two-year program to develop courageous principal leadership. Two principals described the benefits of confidential, trusting relationships with an equity coach. One principal said, "I've been able to grow as a leader because I've been able to open up in that trusting relationship...knowing that... we're goanna screw up and make mistakes all along the way" (A1). Another principal discussed the importance of social and emotional safety as well:

Being able to go to this cohort and just listen, and share, and know that it's a safe atmosphere, and it's not going to count against you. And you can be honest and truthful and transparent and learn from all of these principals across the metro...I didn't realize all of this racial equity work was missing from my life before... I'm a different person. I see things way differently. I feel I'm a way better principal and leader. (A9)

This experience for principals provided insight about the value of equity coaching in which their teachers were similarly engaged.

Another principal wrestled with the role as a building leader in trying to create the best school for all kids. The principal's critical self-reflection was not yet resolved, but demonstrated growth in the depth of the questions:

The piece that creates for me the most angst: I've got an achievement gap...that is stubborn...And, I have a duty to grow [in racial consciousness] as an individual so all kids can grow here. That message has been, in my mind, stated loud and clear...So, if I question how much stress you can put a building under, and if I'm going to work to keep it under that amount of stress because I can't do a quality job with the resources we have or the resources that are given, what does that mean? What kind of equity walk am I walking? (A7)

A district administrator described their growth in racial consciousness and its potential impact on the classroom, saying,

It's been a time of great personal learning for me. I am so excited by that...So, if I start seeing every student, then I start making space in the classroom for those students' ways of being—other ways of being. And that has to move into the [curriculum]. (A4)

Each of these administrators described their personal growth in critical self-reflection to develop racial consciousness. This is the foundational element of culturally responsive leadership.

Culturally responsive leadership

Being self-reflective is what grounds a culturally responsive leader. However, as Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis (2016), write,

By emphasizing the word responsive, we capture an important action-based, and even urgent, aspect of the term: the ability of school leaders to create school contexts and curriculum that responds effectively to the educational, social, political, and cultural needs of students (p. 7).

One principal echoed these words, revealing a culturally responsive mindset:

And so, what does it mean [for a parent] to be heard? It means to take action. So, if you really are being heard, you move beyond mindful listening, beyond just like “I heard your point of view. I can even recount it back to you.” But what action happens because of what you just shared? (A8)

Another principal described the actions they took in response to a school resource officer’s request. The officer disagreed with a fourth-grade student’s illustration that contained the question, “Why do all the police officers shoot Black people?” and requested that it be taken down. The administrator recalled their self-reflection:

So I looked at it. I looked at it again. I read, and then I started catching myself, “Well, maybe the student could change the word “all” to “some.” And then I thought, “Wait a minute. It’s not my job to tell this fourth grader...“Can you change?” because there’s nothing wrong. These are her thoughts, and [honoring student voice is] what are we about at [this school]. (A9)

The parents, a White woman and a Black man, thanked the principal for his courage and his willingness to support their daughter. The principal ended this story, saying, “But our focus on equity made this such a great learning experience for everybody. And I don’t know that the situation would have [gone] this way if we weren’t where we are at our school” (A9).

Culturally responsive leadership is also demonstrated by creating inclusive school communities. One principal increased the number of teachers of color to nearly twenty percent in a state where ninety-six percent of teachers were White in 2016 (Hamilton, et al. 2016). The principal designed preliminary written questions for candidates that would

draw out prospective teachers' experiences working with students of color. Many times, close reading of each resume created a diverse pool of candidates to interview and potentially select. In hiring for non-licensed positions, the principal described intentionally hiring candidates that wanted careers in education, adding, "And then my job is to develop them in leadership capacities in this building" (A8).

Culturally responsive leadership meets resistance.

At times, culturally responsive leadership is extremely difficult. Two administrators described their challenges in changing perspectives, changing systems and practices, and changing behaviors in order to create inclusive communities.

One administrator identified a hardship in being a culturally responsive leader is that it is public work and it demands personal action. At times, principals and administrators suggested that others needed to send out letters or to make public statements that demonstrate culturally responsive leadership in times of crisis. One administrator stated, "They want someone else to do it. And that's the challenge of this work. Personal, local and immediate means personal, local, and immediate. It doesn't mean someone else's personal, local, and immediate" (A3). As Khalifa et al. (2016) described leadership, taking action beyond critical self-reflection is what defines a culturally responsive leader and this administrator wanted colleagues to do that.

One administrator of color described the loss of their role as principal when a majority of White parents complained to the school board and previous superintendent about the principal's disciplinary practices. The principal had shifted the behavioral focus from consequence-driven to proactively building relationships with students, resulting in a decrease in behavioral incidents. Eventually, the principal was placed on

leave, an investigation was conducted, with the principal ultimately cleared of any wrongdoing. However the principal was reassigned to a district role. This administrator reflected:

So, it showed me, [that] they said they wanted all children to learn, but their actions were different. They said that they cared about all students, but their actions were different. They said that they were supporting me, but their actions were different. And so, I never really thought about race for me as the only Black principal in the district until that occurred.

Another administrator reflected on witnessing the colleague's experience:

In looking at how the system is complicit in a racist act, and I'm a part of that because nobody is speaking up. And yet, we engage in racial equity here. Why are we so afraid? Why was each one of us so afraid? And the principal group, all White. Why were they so afraid to ask, to go to bat, to see this as an attack on their community?...It reminds me of, "If you're not actively going against the flow on the escalator, you're really just, by standing still, you're really perpetuating the system." (A4)

Organizational Learning

Administrators identified four key elements that impacted systemic organizational learning and the effective implementation of peer equity coaching: (a) relationships between peer equity coaches and building administrators; (b) the learning demonstrated and supported by district level administrators; (c) the structure of peer equity coaching in relationship to instructional coaching; and (d) the nature of peer equity coaching as part of the alternative teacher professional pay system (ATPPS).

Equity coach-principal relationships.

Principals described varying degrees of relationship with peer equity coaches in their schools, from limited interaction to working closely together, echoing the findings from equity coaches in Chapter 4. Most administrators acknowledged the confidential nature of the equity coach-teacher relationship, as one principal said, “It doesn’t matter how many team meetings I have, *they* are having these one on one personal connections” (A1). And when principals and equity coaches had strong relationships, the principal could confidentially problem-solve and plan together, so that, “if something ‘hits the fan,’ I... have that safety net that I could go to” (A1). Many principals discussed working with their equity coaches to discuss themes and patterns in teachers’ responses to equity coaching, which then guided the principal in decision-making, planning for professional learning, modifying school procedures, and shaping messages to the staff.

One principal described the impact upon their capacity to support cultural change after a new equity coach was assigned to the building and there was not a strong working relationship: “I’m just really feeling out of the loop. And so, all of these wonderful things may still be happening, but I don’t hear it like I used to hear it...My capacity to lead equitably cannot be a silo” (A1). The principal suggested three possible reasons for the limited working relationship with the new coach: differing perspectives on the coach-administrator relationship; time constraints due to the caseloads and job duties of the equity coaches; or the trust level between the equity coach and administrator had not yet been developed.

Another principal recognized that, although the relationship with the equity coach was collegial, there was limited alignment in a primary responsibility of both positions, which was to provide teachers feedback, saying:

I would love to learn more...of what it is that you [the equity coach] look for. Or how you even have a conversation around [culturally responsive teaching]. I'm sure there's learning that I would want... It just hasn't happened. Why or why not? ...It's very clear that we don't talk about teachers between equity coaches and administration. That coaching piece is sacred in a way. (A2)

One district administrator juxtaposed two conflicting organizational needs: the need for transparency and the need for confidentiality between coach and principal. The administrator stated: "Where the principals have intentionally built a relationship with the equity coach, it's worked better than where the principals have not. I think right now we've learned that it shouldn't be optional" (A6).

The administrator advocated for greater openness between equity coaches and principals, saying,

The bottom line for me is we're not going to be on the same team and we're not going to create this system where all of our students prosper if we have this lack of transparency. Our building principals have to be included and they...have felt excluded...All of our principals are doing their own racial equity work and doing their best to show up as racial equity leaders too. We can't sit in judgment of that and wait for a magic time to say, "Oh I [the equity coach] can come and talk to you about somebody doing something that I observed to be racially based" (A6).

This position counters the perspective that many other administrators shared, that peer equity coaching had to be a confidential process, with the equity coach and principal working together to discuss themes and next steps in implementation or organizational learning.

District leadership and organizational learning.

Principals described the significance of the organizational support provided by the school board and superintendent in creating systemic change. One principal said, “So what I think the district has done is spring boarded the desire and fueled the interest [to develop racial consciousness and cultural responsiveness]” (A7). Another principal stated,

I know I can do stuff with the position that I have, but my circle of influence stops at a certain point if people above me don’t continue that journey as well. So, this administration right now has really understood that, and has really pushed not only with the school board, but within the district office to push that level of coaching, having that level of understanding. (A8)

Cabinet members also engaged in professional learning regarding race and culture, writing and sharing their racial autobiographies as a team. One administrator stated,

Now, that’s a giant step forward for us because we’re being vulnerable with each other, which is rare for the cabinet. Part of it is team-building and building trust and honesty among the group. And part of it is putting a little pressure on them to lead with their group in their own way. (A3)

One member of the cabinet acknowledged this learning: “And so, do we talk about race? We try. We can get better. We make space for it. And we always try to bring it up in our decision-making. [We are] not anywhere near where we need to be” (A6).

The superintendent described the unwavering support of the school board and his continued focus on racial equity:

And you get criticized non-stop from every corner, from people who think you’re doing too much to people who think you’re doing too little; to people who think you’re doing too much PEG [Pacific Educational Group] to people who think you should only be doing PEG. But, my job is to kind of chart the course that I think’s best, keep the board in the loop, make sure they have everyone’s back, which they do. Seven to nothing, every single board member supports this. So, I think it’s a lot to be proud of, but I can see why people don’t do it. It’s a lot easier not to...But it’s the right thing to do for the kids.

The nexus of equity and instructional coaching.

Peer equity coaching, as a tool to develop teachers’ racial consciousness, was separate from instructional coaching. Some administrators suggested blending instructional coaching with equity coaching. Others resisted this suggestion. All administrators agreed that there were too many coaches in the district, which created confusion for teachers:

And they’re hearing one thing from their equity coach. They’re hearing a different thing from their instructional coach. They may or may not be hearing something else from somebody else. So, how am I supposed to put that together as an individual teacher? (A6)

A principal in describing the debate regarding the nexus of instructional and equity coaching, observed, “some arm-wrestling going on behind the scenes about, ‘We really need to do literacy.’ ‘But we also...need to spend time talking about race.’” The principal described a blended or integrated model:

My hope and dream five years from now...[is that] all of our coaches should be equity coaches. We can’t do them separately...We *have* to do them together...and it’s a delicate balance. Because we need to continue to be digging deeper into race and racial consciousness and cultural practice, and then we also can’t forget about “What is best practice related to [math, literacy, and technology]?” (A11)

The difficulty identified by these two administrators is how to provide high quality teacher development in both instructional practices and racial consciousness with a finite amount of time. One district administrator suggested collaboration between instructional and equity coaches, saying, “It is critical for us to have our equity coaches and our instructional coaches working together, because culturally relevant pedagogy is both/and” (A6).

Other administrators countered these perspectives with the concern that blending equity coaching with literacy or math or technology coaching will diminish teachers’ growth in racial consciousness and cultural responsiveness:

Because if you’re going to blend, that’s just going to kill that [equity coaching]. Do we have the wherewithal to stick with equity coaching and know that it has the potential to change how we teach students and how they leave our systems? And so this blending is only another way to get equity coaching to have to defend itself...or to prove that it’s valid. (A4)

Further, this administrator suggested that differing administrative perspectives may be due to race:

And to me, a big marker of this is that it's my White colleagues who want to cling onto blending and defend blending and not hear the perspective from me as a woman of color, from [my colleague] as a woman of color. To give pause and say, "What is different here? Why are two women of color saying, "Maybe we don't need to blend"? (A4)

Another administrator stated: "Understand that equity coaches are instructional coaches...These are master teachers...To think that we need a specialist in kindergarten or [in grade] 1. [We don't]. *They* are specialists" (A5).

Another administrator described blending the roles by having equity coaches "cross-train" to become experts in specific pedagogy and curriculum the district uses. This administrator noted resistance from equity coaches, but continued:

For you to coach, you want to go to twenty trainings a year on racial equity, but we need you to go to five on kindergarten curriculum and instruction...I fully supported two years of super hot and heavy PEG. We have to get everyone on board...Everyone has to have the same vocabulary. But now we have to cross train. (A3)

Most principals described teachers' confusion and the territorial wrestling having so many instructional and equity coaches created. How to remedy that context was not universal and a point of contention for many administrators.

Equity coaching within ATPPS.

As described in Chapter 3, all teachers were required to participate in equity coaching to receive additional stipends from the alternative teacher professional pay system (ATPPS). A second stipulation of ATPPS was that each teacher received feedback from two different individuals throughout the year. This complicated the equity coaching program in four ways: the model itself, the use of equity observers, the financial supports, and the union vote.

Four administrators and principals described the complicating nature of the model itself, noting that the additional pay was tied to completion of the peer evaluations, but not changes in behavior. So, the shift in discourse the equity coaches provided as was different than that of the previous building instruction leaders, but the system to provide feedback was not. The administrator described some teachers still wishing for the old model: “Why can’t it be building instructional leaders, where they would just come in and do an observation and we could just go with it? Those pieces are still swirling...[and] that is causing this friction in the system” (A5).

A second complicating factor was the use of equity observers to complete one of the three annual peer observations, resulting in a decreased number of interactions between equity coaches and their teachers. Equity observers were essentially a building instructional leader with one or two days of equity training provided by the equity coaches. One administrator questioned the intentions of the equity observers because they had not observed these teachers demonstrate culturally responsive leadership as part of staff meetings, and wondered,

So, tell me why an equity observer never stands up and talks about the work they do. Tell me why an equity observer, I never hear them in a courageous conversation. Because all they are to do is go in and have an observation with a teacher, fill out a report, and submit it that it's been done. (A7)

The administrator expressed frustration at the lack or expectation for behavioral shifts in teachers and equity observers, questioning teachers' motivations:

Because they'll take the stipend. That's all their job is to do is the classroom observation and nothing more. Not to grow, not to learn, not to teach, but to fill that classroom observation required by...Q Comp [Quality Compensation]. I call it teachers' union requirements. (A7)

A third complicating factor of the alternative teacher pay framework was the financial overlap of the model. The teachers' union agreed to a decrease in the amount of alternative pay they received in order to fund a portion of the equity coach program, creating reliance upon the teachers' union to continue equity coaching. Another union vote could displace the program, which could influence the nature of equity coaching conversations. One principal echoed the equity coaches' observations described in Chapter 4:

When we do things that are uncomfortable, sometimes we get fatigued, we get to that point where we say, "and we shouldn't have to." And when we do that, I feel like we start to look for, "How can we point out how this system is bad for us or this system is not working?"...I worry about us getting in our [own] way, picking it apart, and using some union rhetoric to figure out why we shouldn't be doing it. (A10)

Another administrator suggested, “I think...that the teachers are...giving up some of their money. So they feel like, ‘If we’re giving money, we have this control.’ They want to have say in how it’s going to be run” (A5). Teachers in Chapter 5 made very similar statements. The school district and the teachers’ union both contributed to the financial support of peer equity coaching, and both wanted to influence the implementation of the program.

One administrator critically questioned whether the district was one hundred percent in support of equity coaching because they were not funding the program outright. The administrator stated, “If we are about the work, what is it about the equity coaches that this wasn’t funded, but we’re ready to fund other instructional coaches? What’s the difference between the two?” (A5).

Looking ahead as an organization.

Administrators are charged with leading the organization with clarity of vision and purpose. In Johnson Public Schools, all administrators supported the continuation of equity coaching. With the announcement of the superintendent’s retirement at the end of the school year, all hoped the next leader would support equity coaching as well.

One district administrator stated, “I see we need to stay with the vocabulary because it brings us all together. So I don’t ever see us moving away from Courageous Conversations protocol. That’s just one thing that binds us all together” (A3). A principal stated,

I do think that we have a lot of momentum in our district. We have a foundation of moving in a clear direction. Having been here for as many years as I have, and

having been under a lot of superintendents, I am cautiously optimistic that the next superintendent will walk in and will see the value in that position. (A8)

In this chapter, I reported the context of peer equity coaching as administrators viewed it. I described administrators' observations of shifts in the behaviors, processes, relationships, and structures within their schools and district. I related stories of personal growth in culturally responsive leadership and resistance that sometimes opposed culturally responsive leadership. Finally, I presented examples of organizational learning and the structures that supported or complicated equity coaching, followed by administrative considerations of next steps. The next chapter will provide an analysis and synthesis of the findings from Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Chapter 7

Analysis and Synthesis

No educational institution teaches just through its courses, workshops, and institutes; no corporation teaches just through its in-service education programs; and no voluntary organization teaches just through its meetings and study groups...they teach by everything they do. (Knowles, Holton and Swanson, 2014)

The purpose of this qualitative case study informed by collaborative social research was to examine the impact of peer equity coaching and the administrative supports necessary to ensure organizational learning and systemic change in one school district. Three questions guided this study:

- (1) What is the nature of a peer equity coaching conversation and does it lead to transformative adult learning?
- (2) What is the nature of administrative leadership to foster organizational learning through peer equity coaching programs?
- (3) Is there evidence that peer equity coaching could affect systemic change in the capacity to create equitable learning environments and opportunities for students of color and Native American students?

This study was informed by three bodies of literature. These included literature that identifies, defines, and discusses a) bias or implicit association, mind-sets, and intercultural competence and their interaction with cultural responsiveness in schools; b) adult learning theory, transformative learning theory, and critical self-reflection; and c) organizational and school culture, including the nature of culturally responsive leadership and peer coaching.

Chapters four, five, and six presented the detailed findings that emerged from analysis of interviews with eight equity coaches, twenty tenured teachers, and eleven school and district administrators. This chapter is intended as a cross-chapter synthesis, organized by each of the guiding questions. I will provide a brief synopsis of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2, present key findings related to each question, discuss how the findings correspond to or contradict the literature, and present a limited number of unanticipated findings for each inquiry.

Question 1: Peer Equity Coaching and Transformative Learning

Three sets of literature inform the first question of this study around which the findings are organized. These are transformative learning, peer coaching, and adult learning.

Synopsis of literature: Transformative learning.

The first question guiding this study is whether transformative adult learning, which Mezirow (1997) described as a “process of effecting change in a *frame of reference*” (p. 5), occurs as a result of peer equity coaching. Often times, for a change in a person’s frame of reference, adults experience some sort of disorienting dilemma (Calleja, 2014; Mezirow, 1997) or disequilibrium (Dewey, 1938, as cited in Rogers, 2002) that leads to reflection. Additionally, adults may have an awareness of a particular assumption not previously considered (Brown, 2006). These disorienting dilemmas and awareness provide the learner with an opportunity to reflect and make conscious choices in understanding that event. Critical discourse can expand the adult’s understanding of

the event or awareness. The data reveal that transformative learning can happen because of peer equity coaching.

Key findings regarding transformative learning.

All three of the previous chapters described peer equity coaching as guiding educators' discourse to "transform our ethnocentric habits of mind by becoming aware and critically reflective of our generalized bias in the way we view groups" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 7). Consider the stories of individual teachers described in chapters four and five: the elementary teacher, who discovered in a peer equity coaching session that she repeatedly provided negative comments to one Black female in her classroom while providing positive comments to the White males, whose response was, "Oh my God, I didn't even know I was doing that! It probably feels horrible!" Experiences like these transformed teacher thinking about racial oppression as well as how they interacted with children.

Another teacher, with her equity coach, discovered an absent narrative about the planning of the nation's capital, which led to more lessons that were more inclusive. When the equity coach suggested the teacher research Benjamin Banneker's contribution, the teacher said, "Oh my God, I'm so emotional because I didn't know! And so, what else do I not know? And how do I find it out?" A high school teacher, when challenged by a student, discovered through dialogue with the equity coach, that talking about race with students was more helpful than avoiding it, and noted, "it was the start of a big shift of that I don't have to have all the answers." Both teachers transformed their frames of reference to become more comfortable with the idea that they will not have to have all the answers and, that in some cases students may know more than they do.

Consider the administrator who worked with the equity coach to respond to the school resource officer's request to take down a piece of student artwork. The principal declined to remove the poster, and learned that it was important to elevate student experience and opinions to have the same status as adult experience and opinions in some settings. In this instance, transformative learning by the principal supported learning among staff and community.

This is transformative learning and, in these cases, peer equity coaching either provided the disorienting dilemma (Calleja, 2014; Mezirow, 1997) by asking questions during the coaching session or the discourse to deepen teacher and administrator understanding of an event. Through discourse, coaches and their partners unearthed implicit biases that allowed them to consciously choose to act in culturally responsive ways.

Synopsis of literature: Nature of peer equity coaching

The second component of the first question of this study investigated the nature of peer equity coaching. The literature informs this discussion in two primary areas. These are peer coaching and adult learning.

Peer Coaching.

As described in chapter two, peer coaching is the process of colleagues observing one another or a teacher working with a coach to facilitate reflective discussion and feedback on teacher planning, practice, student performance, relationships, and classroom environment. It is non-evaluative, based on trusting relationships between coach and teacher, focused on student learning, is context-based, and informed by critical reflection

(Ackland, 1991; Cornett & Knight, 2009; Huston & Weaver, 2007; Knight et al., 2015; Wong & Nicotera, 2003; Woulfin, 2014). Successful peer coaching programs involve goal-setting that emanates from the teacher, voluntary participation, confidentiality, formative evaluation of the coaching program while maintaining confidentiality, and organizational support in the form of funding, clarity of purpose, publicizing the program, and honoring the coaches. Partnership and a recognition of the professionalism of both parties are critical, as is a focus on students rather than the teacher. Multiple studies suggest positive impacts on attitudes, skill, feelings of teacher efficacy, and student achievement (Cornett & Knight, 2009; Joyce & Showers, 1980; Knight, 2009; Teemant, Wink & Tyra, 2010).

Key Findings: Peer equity coaching

As described in Chapters 4 and 5, many of these components described above were evident in the model at Johnson Public Schools. In individual sessions, peer equity coaches used general questions such as, “How did you feel it went?” or, “What are your thoughts about this?” to set the stage, often following with questions intended to elicit self-reflection about the teacher’s role or possible alternative ways of seeing an event or a understanding a student. In the examples shown in the previous chapters, many times equity coaches guided teachers to consider their actions and the impact of those actions on relationships with students and their academic attainment. By focusing attention on race, coaching conversations often led to insights about the influence of teachers’ implicit biases on their actions. With awareness, teachers could then change their actions to align with their intentions to create inclusive classrooms.

Often, the result was increased teacher engagement. For example, one teacher shared, “Truly the challenges that I’ve been presented with to grow and improve during work with my equity coach and coaches have made me fall in love with teaching again” (T10).

Complicating factors.

Many of the components of peer equity coaching in Johnson Public Schools, aligned with the literature regarding peer coaching. These include dialogue within a trusting relationship, respecting the professionalism of the teacher, context-based within the lesson, focused on student success, and critical self-reflection. However, situated within the alternative teacher pay framework, there were several complicating factors, two of them being evaluation and required participation.

All equity coaches and most of the administrators stated that situating peer equity coaching within the Alternative Teacher Professional Pay System (ATPPS) complicated the nature of peer equity coaching as it was evaluative and tied to additional teacher pay. One equity coach stated, “Even though my job technically is peer coach, in some ways, I’m still evaluating them” (EC1). Another coach reflected on this tension, saying, “I felt it today as I was shooting off emails. ‘I need you to submit this report.’ ‘I need you to do this for observation three.’ And I was thinking, “This doesn’t feel like a peer here” (EC2). The contract language between the district and the teachers’ union confirms this, stating that a teacher must be rated an average of three on the four point rubric (Danielson, 2007) in order to be eligible for compensation increases.

There were no formal measurements for growth in critical self-reflection, inclusive curriculum, culturally responsive pedagogy, or creating an inclusive classroom

environment. This omission of the components of culturally responsive teaching on the observation forms was a second complicating factor, with one coach going so far as to say that the rubric “has nothing to do with equity. I could mark you proficient and you could be completely racially dis-conscious” (EC2).

A third complicating factor was the requirement that all teachers participate in coaching. During the first three years of the equity coaching program, teachers opted into the initiative, but in the fourth year, equity coaching was adopted across the whole district with a majority vote of the teachers, making it a requirement for all teachers.

In addition to being required to participate, the requirement that all teachers complete and share their racial autobiographies and develop proficiency using the Courageous Conversations Compass and Protocol (Singleton & Linton, 2006) competed with the nature of peer coaching being context based, teacher choice as described in the literature. This decision was not supported by all, with one equity coach leaving the district after this decision. A principal worried, that the new model was “not as much about making sure the coach [has] a connection with [the teacher]. It’s about making sure that [the teacher] knows the protocol and...compass, and is showing up using protocol and...in ways that [are racially] identifiable” (A1).

A fifth complicating factor was the limited number of interactions between equity coaches and teachers, thus hindering the development of trusting relationships. As reported in Chapter 5, even though there was limited time for one-to-one equity coaching, many teachers reported personal growth through training at monthly staff meetings led by their equity coaches.

Unanticipated finding of peer equity coaching.

Teachers of color reported feeling a deep level of support and validation as a result of equity coaching and the professional learning the equity coaches provided. Examples in Chapter 5 include a bilingual teacher connecting deeply with a bilingual equity coach because of the common language and cultural understanding; an equity coach of color who guided a team to repair their relationship; and a teacher of color who simply felt less isolated because the equity coach led discussions about the impact of racism. As a result, teachers of color reported greater participation in discussions and decision-making. This unanticipated finding emerged from the data.

Synopsis of literature: Adult learning in the context of peer equity coaching.

Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2014) describe six assumptions of andragogy as (1) the learner's need to know or their why, (2) the learner's self concept or ownership of the learning, (3) the role of learner's prior experiences, (4) the learner's developmental readiness to learn, (5) the learner's orientation—will learning improve the situation?, and (6) the learner's internal or external motivation (Knowles, Holton, and Swanson, 2014). They further state, "Adults generally become ready to learn when their life situation creates a need to know" (p.179), and point out that physical and emotional safety is essential.

Other scholars discuss the difficulty of recognizing implicit bias or one's own privilege (Banaji & Greenwald, 2013; Feagin, 2013; Johnson, 2006; McIntosh, 1988; Senge, 2006). The disequilibrium of becoming conscious of privilege and implicit bias can create resistance. Ridgeway (2014) notes that when members of groups perceived to

have lower status post challenges to that order, defense of the status quo can become hostile. Peer equity coaching was intended to overcome some of these barriers.

Key findings regarding adult learning through peer equity coaching.

In Johnson Public Schools, every teacher interviewed said they supported the efforts to create more equitable, culturally responsive classrooms and most valued their equity coaches. Almost all teachers described some shift in perspectives about their students, their pedagogy or their curriculum. However, with that endorsement, some teachers wanted more information about what to do beyond critical self-reflection. Others continued to focus on the absence of clear strategies or tools for changing student behavior. Others had difficulty distinguishing between the one-on-one coaching and district-mandated professional development using materials provided by Pacific Education Group.

There are several questions about the peer equity coaching initiative that are reflected in teachers' desires for specific tools rather than seeing a connection between transforming their own mind set and creating inclusive student learning opportunities in their classrooms. First, the journey to understanding personal assumptions as a barrier to student learning is, as was shown in Chapter 5, often a long one. Teachers who were exposed to the program for different periods of time or had different experiences with one-to-one equity coaches were, as several administrators noted in Chapter 6, not on the same page.

A second key finding is that quite a few teachers stated that their needs were not being met in order to grow in culturally responsive teaching. Was this a result of a missed component of adult learning theory, a lack of social or emotional safety, limited skills of

the equity coach, or differential exposure to coaching? This study cannot draw a definitive response, but an important conclusion is that, although adult learning requires social processing of ideas, the practice of adult learning in school-wide settings is very complex because of the wide variation of life experiences and the depth of previous learning within the group.

The issue of safety in adult learning settings was revealed by several teachers who reported that they were afraid of being perceived as a racist, or that they would say something wrong. As one noted, “I think I was avoiding it [equity coaching] mainly out of fear, like, ‘Are you going to find...that I’m not being equitable?’” Teachers also pointed to the difficulty of confronting unintentional acts, and the gap between the person’s intention and their actions due to limited intercultural experiences, knowledge, and implicit biases (Hammer, 2016; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). Banaji and Greenwald (2013) state that if we only look at acts of hostility to show discrimination, “we may fail to see the far more pervasive ways in which hidden biases maintain the status quo, depriving those on the bottom rungs of society of the resources available to the more privileged by birth and status” (p. 143). Intentional or not, the results of unexamined actions can be experienced by students, families, and colleagues as oppressive, racist, or simply insensitive. A third key finding is that, in order to interrupt the oppression experienced by students, teachers must feel safe and supported in order to critically reflect when encountering disorienting dilemmas in teaching.

In the absence of safe, critically reflective dialogue, some teachers continued to look for solutions to student achievement and avoid the pervasive feeling of guilt experienced after a district-wide training. As one teacher stated after a daylong

professional training with Pacific Educational Group, “I don’t need to be driving home feeling bad... I want solutions. And, I just don’t feel there are a lot of solutions in all this racial equity work that we’re doing.” In looking to andragogy to understand this statement, there appears to be lack of teacher ownership of their learning, a weak connection with prior experiences, skepticism that critical self-awareness will improve the situation in his or her classroom, and a lack of safety in raising these issues publicly. A fourth key finding is that all the components of andragogy must be met in order to engage an adult learner. In addition, within the statement above is the final key finding. The teacher appears to conflate equity coaching with the messages from Pacific Educational Group, saying “all this equity work.” The negative response to the consultants may sway the response to peer equity coaches, further complicating the work of equity coaches.

Unanticipated finding regarding adult learning.

Teachers’ requests for strategies to develop culturally responsive relationships, curriculum, and pedagogy, as well as inclusive classroom environments were viewed as technical solutions or avoidance of discussions about race and culture. This rejection seemed to be supported by a consultant hired to provide guidance to a leadership team. A teacher reported that this consultant said, “Those who are really struggling and wanting technical solutions to what they’re facing have not yet transformed” (T18). Adaptive learning, or critical self-reflection to understand implicit bias and develop racial consciousness was viewed with higher regard. This negative assessment precludes the opportunity to attend to the needs of the learner.

Simply refusing the request for strategies caused rejection or avoidance of equity coaching for some teachers. Because there is no universal starting point to developing racial consciousness, providing strategies that lead to successful interactions could create the sense of safety the learner needs to engage the critical self-reflection through discourse. Adult learning theory suggests that the request for technical learning may be a signal that the learner does not feel safe, that key components of andragogy have not been met, or simply that this is the learner's developmental readiness level. Establishing safety along with the key components of andragogy are paramount to any learning to develop cultural responsiveness.

Question 2: Administrative Leadership

The second question of this study is, "What is the nature of administrative leadership to foster organizational learning through peer equity coaching programs?" As discussed in Chapter 2, the educational leadership literature frequently emphasizes the importance of developing leadership at all levels in order for organizations to learn and adapt. Leithwood et al. (2004) point to several aspects of leadership that are particularly salient to this study: instructional leadership development, district-wide job-embedded professional development, and an emphasis on teamwork and professional community. Heifetz (1994), Senge (2006) and Argyris & Schön (1996) point to the need for leaders themselves to engage in critical, self-reflective learning if they are to support it in others.

Other authors emphasize the importance of taking an organization-wide view if learning and change are to occur. Firestone and Louis (1999) describe the work of transformational leaders as "creating a vision, setting high expectations for performance, creating consensus around group goals, and developing an intellectually stimulating

climate” (p. 315). Shields (2013) describes transformational leaders as “primarily concerned with organizational effects and outcomes,” treating “the organization as a homogenous whole” and focusing on “the shared expectations and needs of the dominant (and often most vocal) leaders and followers” (p. 20).

Hewitt, Davis, and Lashley (2014) point to the importance of questioning and disrupting the current status quo. All of these ideas are consistent with the idea of transformative learning as “effective change in a *frame of reference*” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5). In this study, the frame of reference that administrators were expected to challenge was the need to create a more culturally responsive school that was inclusive of Brown and Black students. Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis (2016) describe four behaviors of culturally responsive school leaders. These are continually developing critical self-awareness, ensuring culturally responsive curricula and teacher preparation, developing culturally responsive and inclusive school environments, and engaging students and parents in community contexts. Shields (2002) emphasizes the importance of “developing respect, eliminating power inequities, embracing diverse perspectives, and establishing high expectations for all students” (p. 223).

Culturally responsive, transformative school leaders would be critically self-aware, develop respect, provide culturally responsive curricula, ensure inclusive classroom and school environments that eliminate power inequities and embrace diverse student and parent perspectives, and hold high expectations for all learners. The next section will provide key findings of administrative actions that fostered organizational learning through peer equity coaching. Some of these actions required culturally

responsive, transformative leadership in Johnson Public Schools according to the characteristics described above.

Key findings regarding administrative leadership.

Administrators in Johnson Public Schools provided leadership that encouraged and supported the development of the peer equity-coaching program. Because the nature of the equity coach-teacher relationship was confidential, administrators could not speak to individual teacher growth in self-reflection. However, they did observe changes at the district and building levels through discussions at team and faculty meetings. Chapter 6 focused primarily on the individual experiences, learning, and actions of administrators as they worked within multiple district initiatives to create equity. In this section, I will also introduce an organizational perspective, examining the way in which administrators attempted to have a more systemic impact on the district and individual schools.

District level leadership.

Equity coaching in Johnson Public Schools emanated from high school teachers desiring an alternative feedback system that deepened teachers' learning in racial consciousness and cultural responsiveness. The team presented their idea to the high school principal who agreed to their request. The principal assisted and supported the team in working with the district leadership and the state-governing agency to have the pilot model approved. The district then hired a consultant to guide the team to develop the framework of equity coaching and to train the original equity coaches in coaching through a lens of equity. This was the first layer of support for the peer equity coaching

program: saying “yes” to the pilot and working with the teachers to obtain approval from the state agency.

In Chapter 6, key administrators described the unanimous support of the school board and the superintendent’s efforts to create and sustain the vision of equity coaching. District administrators modeled reflective, racially and culturally focused discourse by engaging the compass and protocol at all administrator meetings. The school board’s support, the superintendent’s vision, and the expectation that district administrators use the compass and protocol created the second layer of administrative support for equity coaching.

Key district administrators saw themselves and were seen by others as engaged in both transformational and transformative leadership. The district provided professional learning at all levels of the organization, making systems more effective and making leaders more critically aware of power and privilege within the organization. By supporting professional learning and equity coaching, district administrators intended to interrupt old patterns in order to develop racial consciousness and culturally responsive teaching. Providing the training district-wide was the third layer of administrative support.

Building level leadership.

Because key district administrators modeled transformational and transformative leadership, most building leaders provided support for peer equity coaches and professional learning to develop cultural responsiveness. Support was, in most cases, based on a commitment to personal transformation. Six of eight building administrators developed their skills in culturally responsive leadership by attending a two-year program

at a local university. This provided a safe place to deepen personal awareness regarding power and privilege in school communities and led to systemic shifts at the school level. Principals who paused to consider multiple perspectives of parents, teachers, and students shifted the nature of their responses from knowing and explaining to probing for new understanding.

By providing a personal connection to the peer coaching experience, it also highlighted the importance of strong principal-coach relationships within schools. While the personal commitment to equity work was presented in detail in Chapter 6, here we can extend this to make it clear that the level of principal leadership involvement directly affected the adoption of peer equity coaching in each building.

To give one example, in a school where principal leadership was described by equity coaches as disinterested, faculty support for adopting a district-wide model of peer equity coaching was minimal. In other buildings, principals met often with equity coaches to discern faculty needs and to plan and facilitate faculty discussions to develop cultural responsiveness. The principals modeled and developed the self-reflection necessary to lead organizational learning. In response, teachers were much more open to equity coaching, examining school-wide practices, and creating communities that were more inclusive.

One principal supported a parent-led discussion group about how to raise racially conscious children. By supporting and actively participating with parents, this administrator practiced culturally responsive leadership that helped to create an inclusive school environment that addressed power inequities and embraced diverse student and parent perspectives.

In another building, the administrator led with words that echo the choice of “responsive” that Khalifa, Gooden and Davis (2016) used in their description of culturally responsive school leadership. This culturally responsive, transformative principal stated,

And so, what does it mean to be heard? It means to take action. So, if you really are being heard, you move beyond mindful listening, beyond just like “I heard your point of view. I can even recount it back to you.” But what action happens because of what you just shared? How do I value that perspective?” (A8)

As described in Chapter 6, this principal put into action many transformative practices. The principal participated in planning with the equity coach and building leadership teams, and responded to questions of teachers about the purpose of student council; the process of parent-teacher conferences; and setting academic growth goals for all students. By listening to these diverse teacher voices, school practices were transformed under the direction of this principal.

Along with peer equity coaching, the principals emphasized the development of personal racial consciousness in all professional learning activities, incorporating use of the compass and protocol from Singleton and Linton (2006). The superintendent described the use of the compass and the protocol as tools “that bind us all together... so we can actually talk about race without getting into fights with each other.”

Culturally responsive school leadership that engaged critical self-reflection, that provided and supported the development of culturally responsive pedagogy and curriculum, that created inclusive learning environments, and that responded to the needs

of the community (Khalifa, Gooden, & Davis, 2016) was evident in the work of the administrators and principals, though not universally engaged throughout the district.

Unanticipated findings in administrative leadership.

Culturally responsive, transformative leadership is needed in times of crisis or stress, and the best of intentions to be culturally responsive, transformative leaders do not always match the actions put forth by leaders. An example of this unanticipated finding occurred the day after the presidential election in 2016. Due to the nature of the election and the disparaging remarks about immigrants, many students were visibly upset in their classrooms. Teachers looked to their leaders and equity coaches for guidance to reassure their students. The administrative response was silent and the equity coaches were unavailable at a time when students and teachers desperately needed leadership and support. One administrator stated that they were not centered and just did not know what to say, so said nothing. The intention to be culturally responsive did not align with the silence and lack of availability that day. If culturally responsive leaders cannot be physically or emotionally present during critical times, if they cannot act upon what they espouse, they may be found wanting.

A second unanticipated finding was that the ongoing dialogue regarding the relationship between equity coaching and instructional coaching was divisive and, at times, discordant. Administrators proposed adjustments to the peer equity coaching program, which were in conflict with one another. Many suggested blending instructional coaching with equity coaching to include discussions of curriculum and pedagogy along with self-reflection and inclusive classroom environments. Many principals supported this argument, citing the multiple numbers of coaches (as many as

five) that provided feedback to teachers. Other administrators believed that not isolating race through equity coaching would dilute it to the point of ineffectiveness. This tension was described by equity coaches in Chapter 4 and more broadly by principals and administrators in Chapter 6.

Question 3: Systemic Change and Organizational Learning

The third question of this study posed, “Is there evidence that peer equity coaching could affect systemic change in the capacity to create equitable learning environments and opportunities for students of color and Native American students?” The findings from this study will confirm that systemic change has taken place over time. Because equity coaching was implemented gradually over four years, and because district-wide professional learning from outside consultants also developed racial consciousness, it is difficult to determine the impact on organizational learning specifically due to equity coaching. In the next section, I will provide a brief synopsis of the literature presented in Chapter Two, followed by a discussion of key findings and unanticipated findings.

Organizational Learning.

Prominent scholars describe organizational culture as a social system with a shared set of assumptions that are organized in ways that assist people in meeting their needs and are passed down on to new members (Knowles, Holton III, and Swanson 2014; Schein, 2010). Knowles et al. (2014) write, “No educational institution teaches just through its courses, workshops, and institutes; no corporation teaches just through its in-

service education programs; and no voluntary organization teaches just through its meetings and study groups...they teach by everything they do" (p. 143).

In discussing organizational culture within education, Firestone and Louis (1999) write that the adult school culture can be observed in how adults view students, how they view teaching, and how they view working together. Louis and Lee (2016) found that “academic press, student support, and trust and respect among teachers” (p. 1) were key components of school cultures that supported organizational learning. Further, Louis and Lee (2016) found that the capacity for organizational learning increased when teachers’ professional learning communities engaged in reflective dialogue, de-privatized practice, and shared responsibility.

Key findings regarding systemic change.

Several findings demonstrate that systemic change has occurred in Johnson Public Schools at the district level, the school level, and at the localized team level. At the district level, while it seems obvious to state this finding, it also cannot be overlooked: peer equity coaching exists for one hundred percent of the teachers in Johnson Public Schools. Its impact is greater for some than for others. But, the organization has changed because peer equity coaching exists. Some of these changes can be attributed directly to peer equity coaching as described in Chapters 4 and 5; most have been the result of equity coaching in concert with professional learning led by equity coaches and outside consultants.

The language has changed.

In Johnson Public Schools, the way in which teachers, administrators, and equity coaches talked about race significantly changed over time, resulting in a shift in organizational culture. Using the Courageous Conversations compass and protocol to talk about race, or understanding how a person's race influenced the discussion, status, or decision-making became the norm. One principal described changes in faculty discussions over time as moving from discomfort in talking about race to identifying White privilege and systemic oppression as a result. Another principal described the ease he has in identifying and naming race as part of conflict resolution or in parent discussions.

Administrators and equity coaches reported using the Courageous Conversations About Race compass and protocol (Singleton & Linton, 2006) in most dialogues and team meetings. Key district leaders stated that these have become the standard tool for adults to use in any discussion or planning meeting. In addition, all teachers and administrators across the district have written and shared their racial autobiographies, connecting their personal racial history to their current work. As a result of equity coaching, professional learning, and district expectations of the use of the protocol and compass, the language of the district has shifted to include race and culture in most discussions.

Systemic changes in one school.

One school led by a culturally responsive, transformative principal with the building leadership team and faculty created significant, systemic changes to a number of systems and practices at the school. These changes were discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

As a result of the ongoing professional learning and peer equity coaching, this school created a new model of parent-teacher conferences; adopted a new form of student council; increased the number of teachers of color in the school; responded to calls from teachers of color to measure school improvement that included all students; and developed teacher effectiveness reports that reflected the growth of all students. This is a significant finding of the study: one school deeply implemented the organizational learning provided by equity coaches and outside consultants to effect greater equity for members of its community.

Localized transformative organizational learning.

Pockets of transformation in response to equity coaching and professional learning were evident across Johnson Public Schools. The high school changed its enrollment practices for advanced placement classes and made significant shifts to the schedule to accommodate the new policy. Students could enroll for just one advanced placement course rather than three that were previously required. Transformative leaders acted in response to their own equity coaching and professional learning about race, culture, inclusion, and oppression to create more equitable access to advanced placement courses for all students.

Several teachers described shifts that occurred at the team level. One teacher described dismantling a grading policy that favored students who submitted their homework. The grading policy was changed to assess student learning rather than homework completion, creating greater access to successful course completion. A teacher of color described engaging their teammates to respond to a parent's criticism of changes to school parties. The colleagues collectively responded, and the teacher

acknowledged this was possible because of equity coaching, the new culture of talking about race and culture, and the growth observed in their teammates. Both of these examples suggest that pockets of transformation were occurring at the team level throughout the organization, another significant finding of this study.

Individuals acted as catalysts for change.

One person raising a critical question can lead to transformative changes in policies, practices, or structures; and one person's sphere of influence can engage another's sphere of influence leading to organizational learning at multiple levels. This occurred multiple times in development of equity coaching and in the development of culturally responsive schools. One tenacious, transformative teacher supported and encouraged by a team of teachers and building principal developed the system of peer equity coaching that was adopted by the teachers, the administrators, and the state governing agency. One transformative school leader created multiple changes school-wide, as described above. One transformative superintendent maintained the focus for the school district on developing racial consciousness and cultural responsiveness throughout the district.

Unanticipated finding regarding organizational learning.

In this district committed to developing its teachers' cultural responsiveness, administrators participated at varying degrees of engagement with their own peer equity coaching and self-reflective dialogue. Six of eight principals had their own equity coaches, as was described earlier. Another participated in dialogue at team meetings or, at times with peers. All cabinet members engaged in writing and sharing their personal

autobiographies in the fourth year of equity coaching and professional learning to create equitable school systems, much later than school leaders.

In this section, I presented key findings and unanticipated findings of the study informed by the literature and guided by the three questions of this study. In the next chapter, I will present conclusions, recommendations, and implications for further research.

Chapter 8

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Implications

In this final chapter, I present conclusions that integrate the work of previous scholars with the findings, analysis, and interpretation of the current research. These will lead to recommendations for leaders, teachers, equity coaches, and policy makers. Finally, I will present implications for further research.

Conclusions

Since Chapter 7 covered the ways in which the data addressed the study's research questions, I will focus here on a more succinct synthesis of four conclusions that have implications for research and practice.

Transformative learning.

Transformative learning in individuals' mind-sets led to changes in teacher-student, teacher-parent and parent-administrator relationships, increased student voice, inclusive curricular choices, and culturally responsive pedagogical strategies. Teachers and administrators reported that transformative learning was frequently triggered by an individual's question or was in response to a classroom event. In other cases, it was triggered by a question from the equity coach, with the teacher saying, "I never thought of it that way before".

However, one-to-one coaching or classroom events were not the only precipitators. Transformative learning was also stimulated by group professional learning experiences provided by both equity coaches and outside consultants during staff meetings at each building. In turn, through staff meetings and teacher networks,

individual transformative learning influenced school-wide transformative learning, which ultimately led to procedural and structural shifts in many schools. This happened more frequently when the school administrators practiced transformative and culturally responsive leadership strategies.

Collaboration and competing agendas.

The collaborative nature between the union and the administration of Johnson Public Schools in developing and hosting the peer equity coaching model provided critical groundwork for establishing and sustaining the initiative. Continued engagement of the top leaders (superintendent, leaders from the teachers' union, and building principals) will be essential to sustain and guide the program through any adjustments in the implementation design.

While this collaboration was significant, situating peer equity coaching within the Alternative Teacher Professional Pay System (ATPPS) complicated peer equity coaching in three ways. First, it made coaching an evaluative discussion, thus distorting the nature of the coach-teacher relationship. Requiring all teachers to be coached and to meet a specified proficiency in any one thing is counterintuitive to the nature of peer coaching, does not meet all components of andragogy, and may impact the sense of social or emotional safety necessary for learning to occur.

Second, the work of the equity coaches was viewed as separate from the work of the math, technology, and literacy coaches as well as the International Baccalaureate coordinators. This complicated the organizational flow of information and confused teachers when messages from multiple coaches were poorly aligned. The metaphor

comes to mind of too many cooks in the kitchen, diluting the recipe for academically successful, equitable classrooms.

Lack of coordination among the supports for teacher professional learning was particularly evident because of disagreement about the role and status of equity coaches within the district office. In this case, equity coaches were generally limited to supporting teachers in understanding personal bias, expanding culturally responsive curriculum and pedagogy, and creating inclusive classroom environments while instructional coaches were generally limited to implementing the pedagogical practices endorsed by the district. During this study, the issue of how they could be integrated was unresolved.

Transparency and teacher-driven coaching.

The nature of discourse about race and cultural responsiveness changed over time, in part because of the district's continued commitment to Courageous Conversations professional development provided through the Pacific Education Group and in part because of the work of the equity coaches. In the first three years, small group studies and coaching conversations were primarily teacher-driven, with teachers asking for support and learning regarding specific lessons, critical incidents, examining implicit biases, and other topics of interest.

During the fourth year of the program, the peer equity coaching initiative was expanded to include the entire district, and became both teacher-driven and program-driven. Teachers continued to write their professional goals to establish a focus for coaching throughout the year; at the same time, administration required all equity coaches to develop teachers' capacity to use the Courageous Conversations (Singleton &

Linton, 2006) compass and protocol to talk about race or how a person's race influenced the discussion. All staff trainings, many small group meetings, and coaching conversations began with a review of the compass and protocol in the fourth year.

This decision on the part of district executives complicated the principles of andragogy, which prioritizes the learner's need to know and the development of personal leadership and responsibility for learning. Mandating elements of the Courageous Conversations model was no longer a choice between teacher and coach, but imposed by administration and the equity coaching team to "get everyone on the same page." In some cases, this created resistance or pushback. For some, it also complicated the nature of the coach-teacher relationship, as some teachers may have conflated their experiences from the district-wide professional learning with the one-to-one equity coaching experience.

Disruptive individual leadership was critical.

One person raising a question that disrupts the status quo can change an entire system when circles of influence from one level of the organization intersect and align. Transformative, culturally responsive leadership was evident when one teacher asked if they could develop and pilot an equity coaching model of teacher feedback. In this instance, and in a number of others, that one person grew into a team, and the team gathered support of the administration and the teachers' union.

District staffing decisions precipitated this aggregative effect. The equity coaching team increased annually from two coaches in 2013-2014 to nine coaches in 2016-2017, and from a few buildings to a district-wide model. One tenacious, transformative leader—the superintendent—envisioned a more culturally responsive school district through equity coaching, and in many instances, it is. The success of

sustained leadership in working with the School Board to develop the expanded vision was exemplified by the choice of his replacement, who is another administrator with a strong background in district-level equity work.

But the importance of individual leadership was not confined to the district office. Culturally responsive transformative teachers and administrators who were collaboratively engaged in critical self-reflection through dialogue produced deep and equitable change in the use of power and privilege in their schools and on their teams. Systems did not change on their own. Rather, as seen in this study, transformative individuals who were supported by transformative, culturally responsive leaders raised the critical systemic questions that engaged reflection and responsive action.

Recommendations

The peer equity coaching program in Johnson Public Schools demonstrated capacity for transformative, culturally responsive individual and systemic change. To elevate this work across this district or in any district or organization, I suggest several recommendations.

Recommendation one: Integrate equity and instructional coaching.

Instructional coaching and equity coaching could be integrated so that culturally responsive teaching is responsive to the whole child. Youth do not learn detached from cultural experiences, but within those cultural experiences (Hammond, 2015). ***Coaching for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading (CCRTL)*** would develop and recognize equity coaches who are critically self-reflective with a deep level of intercultural competence and responsiveness; who have highly developed skills in

culturally responsive, research-based pedagogy; who possess a broad base (or are curious to learn it) of socio-political, cultural, and historical knowledge with skills to develop curriculum that integrates that knowledge to interrupt the status quo; and who are exceptionally skilled at creating inclusive classrooms where each student's voice is heard, encouraged, and developed, and parents are welcomed as equal partners in education. Equity coaches for administrators would also be highly capable of assessing and responding to the needs of the communities in which schools and school districts are situated.

The integration of instructional and equity coaching would not blend the two. Rather, integration would weave the two components together. The technical components of pedagogy would not supersede the adaptive, and the adaptive components of reflection and cultural responsiveness would not overwhelm the technical.

Recommendation two: Increase the one-to-one time.

Equity coaches and teachers reported growth in the development of teachers' skills in critical self-reflection about race and culturally responsive teaching over time. *Therefore, a review of the job description to decrease peripheral duties and increase the amount of time in one-to-one coaching sessions with regular informal touch points could enhance the effectiveness of the program.*

Recommendation three: Define culturally responsive teaching and leading.

Teachers, leaders, parents, and school board members could mutually define and envision culturally responsive teaching and leading district-wide, including examples of what it looks like at the classroom level, the school level, and the district level. Even with

a clear district-wide mission to eliminate the predictable student attainment gap, without a clear vision of what that looks like, teachers and leaders may lose focus. Conducting a district-wide equity audit could initiate the dialogue to develop a shared vision of culturally responsive teaching and leading.

Recommendation four: Who decides what growth looks like?

While coaching in its purest form is not evaluative, responsible investment of public dollars includes some sort of measures of growth and accountability. This tension could be addressed if the principles of andragogy and peer coaching were balanced with the district's goals and articulated vision of culturally responsive teaching. *Teachers, in consultation with their coaches for culturally responsive teaching, should write growth goals and preferred measurements based upon their situation and in the context of the district's direction.* Growth regarding critical self-awareness, culturally responsive pedagogy, inclusive curriculum, and classroom environments that are inclusive *from the students' perspectives* could be measured in several ways. In addition to teacher observations, a portfolio of growth could include surveys of students regarding teacher practice and behavior, reflective journaling, demonstration of integrated curriculum development, reflections on pedagogical practices, and so on. This would be helpful for the teacher and the coach to illuminate growth over time.

Recommendation five: Organizational learning at all levels.

Teachers engaged with equity coaching more quickly and with deeper commitment when they observed their building leaders model culturally responsive practices. This makes it incumbent on district leaders to model culturally responsive

leadership for their principals as well. *All layers of the organization need to be engaged in the development of culturally responsive teaching and leading in order to change the system.*

Recommendation six: Equity coaching and Teachers of Color

Teachers of color and Native American teachers universally described feelings of validation and support because of equity coaching and the professional learning surrounding it. Because of this validation, teachers were more likely to engage in racialized conversations with their colleagues, leading to transformative learning at local levels. *Any equity coaching model or professional learning plan to develop culturally responsive teachers should attend to the unique needs and experiences of teachers of color and Native American teachers.*

Implications for Future Research

Further research could address key questions that were generated from the findings of this study. I have suggested five potential areas of interest for a future scholar to address.

Further investigation could be done to determine which school districts, if any, currently integrate instructional coaching with equity coaching to develop culturally responsive, competent teachers. What is the nature of coaching in these districts? Are there clearly articulated models of what culturally responsive teaching looks like? Could findings be validated across settings?

Further investigation to determine any correlation between system-wide culturally responsive teaching and leading and the academic attainment of a district's student

population could be done. Indicators could include changes in adult behavior and practices along with changes in students' academic performance, four-year graduation rates and suspension rates. If positive correlations were indicated, policy makers and district leaders could advocate for systemic changes based upon those findings.

Prominent scholars have demonstrated that adults must have a sense of emotional or social safety along with all the components of andragogy in order for adult learning to occur. Future research could investigate whether these components exist and how they are developed in each teacher-coach relationship. This leads to the nature of a trusting relationship. How is a trusting relationship developed that engages in critical conversations about race? And, what is the nature of emotional safety in dialogues that are expected to create discomfort.

Further investigation could be done to investigate how coaches are used in schools. How many coaches are too many for one teacher? If coaches have conflicting suggestions, whose suggestion supersedes the other? How is coaching aligned to the district's goals?

A final suggestion recognizes that some school districts may not have equity coaches, but may engage in professional learning about race and culture as a staff. How are the components of andragogy along with a sense of emotional and social safety developed in these situations? Does learning occur at the individual level in these situations, or at the school level? Where is change observed?

Summary

This qualitative research study investigated the nature of peer equity coaching in a public school district in Minnesota. It also investigated the nature of administrative

leadership necessary to support peer equity coaching and the organizational learning acquired as a result of the equity coaching program and professional learning that surrounded it.

The literature review informed the methodology of the study and contributed to the collection and analysis of the findings. The final conclusions, recommendations, and implications for further research were presented in this final chapter.

In conclusion, peer equity coaching with professional learning in Johnson Public Schools provided the safe space for many teachers and administrators to talk about race and culture, and the power, privilege, and oppression that surround it. Teachers and leaders engaged in the development of racial consciousness, uncovering implicit biases, and making culturally based decisions that are sure to impact the next generation's experience of race and culture and school.

In the future, Coaching for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading could be the model that fully integrates the development of culturally responsive, competent teachers. Set within the principles of adult learning theory, with a sense of emotional and social safety, in collaboration with peers committed to developing cultural responsiveness and quality instruction, in a system that is reflective at every level, peer equity coaching may be the tool that transforms schools into the inclusive classrooms of opportunity we desire to be.

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Appendix

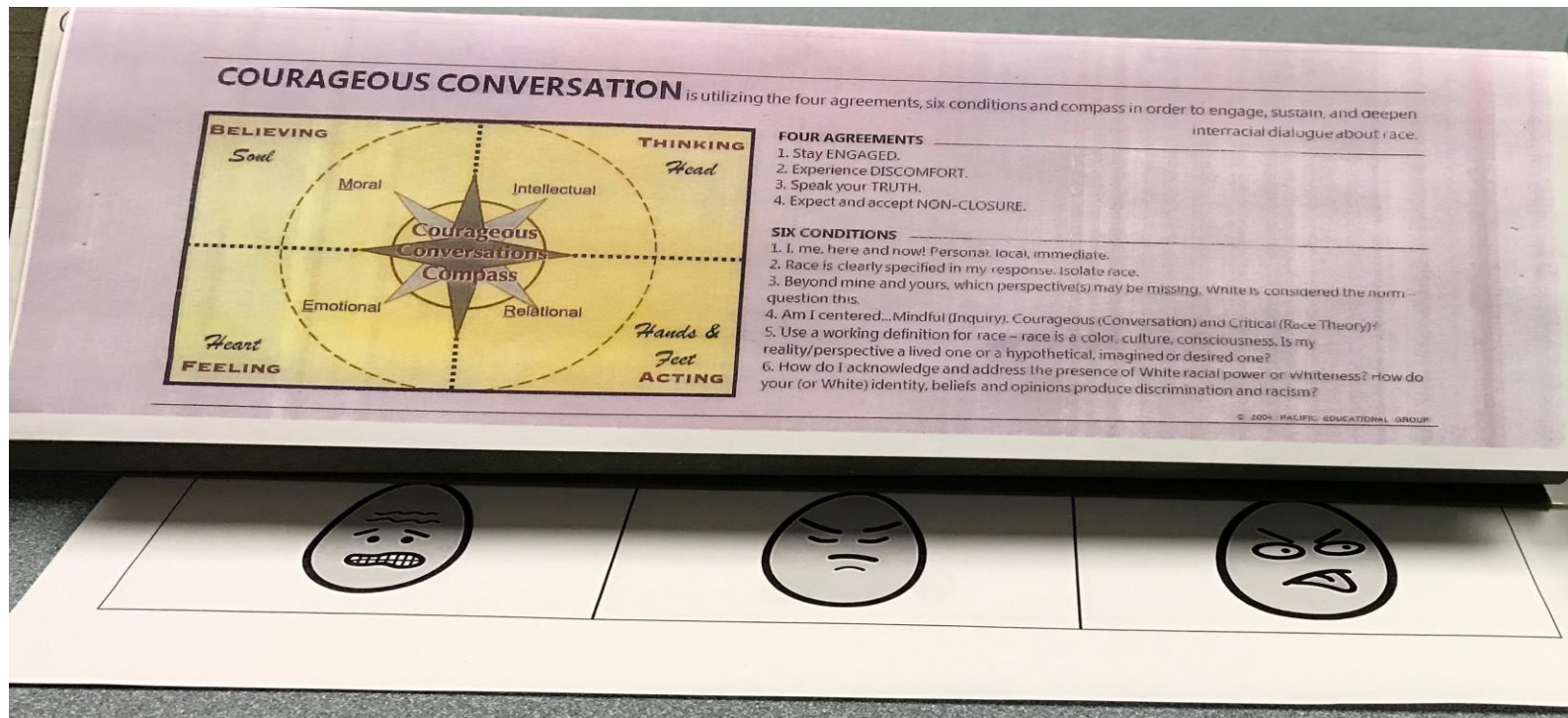


Figure 1
Courageous Conversations about Race Compass and Protocol (2004). Pacific Educational Group
Elementary School Principal's Table Tent with Emotions Table