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Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS: A PHENOMENOGRAPHIC
STUDY OF SCHOOL-WIDE EQUITY PRACTICES, BARRIERS, AND LEADERSHIP
BEHAVIORS NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND CULTURAL
COMPETENCE

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of the
Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership, Administration, and Policy

by

Christopher Gerard Lemieux

September, 2021

Molly McCabe, Ed.D. - Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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To all the mentioned above, you made it all possible! Thank you from the bottom of my heart. My last advice is reserved for anyone considering obtaining a doctorate. I am here to tell you, if I can do it, you can do it! Goodluck and remember it is not about the destination, it is about the journey!

VITA

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ABSTRACT

Independent schools are facing equity changes that had long been avoided, consequently, schools are now faced with adopting equity practices designed to produce equitable outcomes. Equity practices adopted have not been realized without corresponding leadership behaviors necessary to change cultural norms as well as overcoming associative barriers. This study explored how Heads of school in Southern California described the school-wide equity practices they utilized, barriers encountered, and the leadership behaviors that were necessary for achieving diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. This study used a phenomenographic design and included 11 Heads of school identified as having exemplary school-wide equity practices. Data was gathered through a semi-structured interview protocol consisting of 11 interview questions with associative follow-up questions to probe further detail. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and analyzed through a thematic coding process. Analysis of the participants' transcripts produced seven themes relating to the study's three research questions.

The four themes relating to the first research question were: (a) structural institutional alignment of school-wide equity practices; (b) engagement and education; (c) mindful strategic reflection; and (d) an interpersonal and interconnected culture. The theme relating to the second question was barriers to equity practices. The two themes relating to the third question were: (a) necessary leadership behaviors; and (b) changing a culture. Upon further analysis, this study yielded five conclusions. First, independent equity change started with the Head of school. Second, acknowledging that diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) took time, innovation, and problem solving. Third, Heads focused on learning for everyone in the community. Fourth,

Heads viewed equity barriers as opportunities. Lastly, transformational leadership was necessary for school-wide equity practice adoption.

For independent school leaders this study recommends beginning the transformation within self, prior to expecting institutional transformation, and to adopt a distributive leadership model immediately to promptly realize the institutional transformation desired. School leaders need to understand DEI is human transformation and adopt appropriate organizational change management practices that include continuous improvement cycles for their school-wide equity practices leading to systematic formalization. Lastly, practitioners could consider developing effective quantitative measures to help bolster their qualitative evidence.

Chapter 1: Background Information

Educational equity is not a novel concept. The foundations of equity in our current educational system date back almost 100 years. In 1948 the United Nations drafted The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which declared for the first time fundamental human rights for all people of all nations (United Nations, 1948). The declaration described a country in which everyone was entitled to rights and freedoms regardless of any distinction such as race, language, religion, color, sex, national or social origin, political opinion, property, birth, or another status. 30 articles on human rights were included. Article 26 proclaimed that everyone should have the right to education. The declaration stated that education should be free in the elementary and fundamental stages and geared toward developing a human personality that promotes understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all races, religions, nations, and groups and shall further bring peace. However, declared education rights still did not ensure an equitable system.

In 1948, the United States was amid its educational reform. A segregated education system was in place until the 1954 historical outcome of the *Brown v. Board of Education* overturned the doctrine, separate but equal (Gutek, 2013). The desegregation of the American school system was the first attempt at realizing equity within education by first addressing equality. Equity is the recognition that every child has different circumstances and is awarded the exact resources and opportunities necessary to achieve equal outcomes. Equality is simply providing the same exact resources and opportunities to each child. Equal laws and protections must be present prior to providing equity. In sum, equality is the system, and equity is the action to provide fairness.

The *Brown v. Board* (1954) was not the only civil rights case in that era addressing equality and equity in marginalized groups (Arias, 2009). The *Mendez v. Westminster School District* (1946) declared racial discriminatory practices against students of Mexican descent in public schools (Arias, 2009). The Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned discriminatory practices in public entities based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin and later sexual orientation and gender identity (Arias, 2009). *Lau v. Nichols* (1964) declared the supplementation of language equity necessary for students with limited English proficiency (Arias, 2009). As recent as 1996, *Romer v. Evans* declared the laws prohibiting the protections of homosexuals unconstitutional (Socarides, 1993). Additionally, since 2013 there have been three major supreme court decisions regarding the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, asexual, and ally (LGBTQIA+) community, demonstrating the lack of equity and equality that continues to exist within our country that permeates the educational system.

National laws have been passed, adopted, and continually modified to address educational equity within marginalized groups since *Brown v. Board* until this day. In 1965 The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) served low-income students but forced them into culturally and economically disadvantaged programs (Goehring-Juhasz, 2019). The Elementary and Secondary Education Act's foundation provided the basis for the No Child Left Behind (2001, NCLB), which hoped to help marginalized children with quality and equity but showed little to no improvement with teachers and students solely focusing on standardized tests (Ravitch, 2009). The successor of NCLB, Every Student Succeeds Act (2015, ESSA), was the latest version requiring states to identify and support schools with significant equity gaps (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016). This process of passing, adopting, and continually modifying

laws demonstrates educational leaders have deliberated on how to serve a diverse population's needs best.

There has been some progress toward equitable education intertwined with equal outcomes for students based on gender, race, ableness, orientation, and socioeconomic background since the 1960s (Ewell-Eldridge, 2018; Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). In the 1970s, California decided *Serrano v. Priest* (1971, 1976, 1977), attempted to dismantle one systemic educational inequity structure in society by profoundly altering financing for education (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). However, even after 30 years of the *Serrano v. Priest* decisions, disparities continue to persist in funding inequities in the U.S. Although funding will not solve equal playing fields alone, a fundamental change to educating students must occur. In addition to the funding inequalities that continue to persist, educators continue to face the challenge of an ever-increasingly diverse population (D. Mitchell, 2018).

The demographics of the country continue to evolve to a more racially and culturally diverse place. In California, diversity and change have characterized the education system. The most recent data showed that more than 73% of children in the state of California are children of color, 33% of children in single-family households, 21% of low-income working families with children, and 18% have one or more emotional, behavioral, or developmental conditions (KidsCount, 2020). Diverse races, socioeconomically disadvantaged, single-family households, and children with behavioral, emotional, and developmental needs are just some of the marginalized groups in education. Other marginalized diverse groups, like the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, asexual, and ally (LGBTQIA+), continue to be a marginalized group needing support combined with adults that have lacked adequate training to help (Bochenek & Brown, 2001).

As a result of the lack of knowledge and training, there has been a demand for culturally proficient schools with culturally proficient administrators (Arias, 2009). Moreno et al. (2014) assert that the increasing diversity in U.S. classrooms presents significant challenges due to culture and language, compounded by a lack of diverse faculty and culturally competent educators. The new normal in an educational classroom consists of a wide range of race, religion, ethnic identification, sexual orientation, material reality, beliefs, behaviors, etc., leading to a rich diversity and multicultural complexity (Leavitt, 2010). McCrimmon (2004) offered the following insight on multicultural education: “Multicultural education should include gender equity, alternative lifestyles, cultural pluralism, educational opportunities, religious and socioeconomic diversity -- as well as ethnic and racial issues” (p. 12). Multicultural education involves cultural proficiency. Cultural proficiency is a paradigm shift, which can be a philosophy, worldview, or way a person or organization ponders assumptions for effectively relating, acknowledging, and preparing for issues developing in a diverse environment where learning about cultures is the norm, not viewing them as problematic (Lindsey et al., 2018).

Culturally proficient practices and policies have transgressed schools’ basic vision and mission statements (Arias, 2009). Culturally proficient practices and policies have begun to develop into actions that promote greater respect for one another irrespective of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. Moving forward, school leaders of the 21st century must continue to dive deeper into culturally proficient schools’ values, behaviors, policies, and practices. One way to dive deeper and promote greater respect is by gaining knowledge through professional developments (PD’s) that teach educators. Knowing the cultural proficiency continuum resulting from PD’s is important, but understanding the continuum is essential to breaking down barriers. The continuum has six stages: cultural proficiency, cultural competence,

cultural precompetence, cultural blindness, cultural incapacity, cultural destructiveness (Lindsey et al., 2018). It is in the school's best practice to adopt and adapt to the increasingly diverse classroom environment. Chin and Trimble (2015) describe this notion as school systems in dire need of leaders who acknowledge the fundamental importance of social justice and reconstruct their institutions and visions around equitable practices.

The overwhelming amount of literature on educational equity, including diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence, stems from the public education sector. There is minimal literature around U.S. independent schools on educational equity. Daniels (2011) described independent schools as institutions accountable to both parents and the community, who benefited from that accountability forced from external assessment and performance comparisons with competitors. Multiple constituency groups is a critical factor in understanding why inclusion, diversity, and cultural competence are so important for independent schools. Becoming more culturally proficient, uncovering barriers, and learning how schools address cultural awareness benefit all independent school's constituencies: administration; faculty and staff; parents; the Board of Trustees (Board); students; as well as extended family, friends, and other educators in the community.

Educational equity is a persistent challenge among California independent schools. The California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) enrolls 39 % of children of color as compared to 73% that exists in the entire child population (CAIS, 2020). This is an alarming statistic facing educational equity within independent schools as families may postulate if independent schools are an authentic, real-world experience. As families begin to demand the educational equity and cultural competency philosophy, independent schools must adapt to meet their needs. One of the biggest strengths of the independent school systems is that they are free

of the constraints that are intrinsic to the public school system, able to innovate, provide for diversity, and quickly react to diverse student and community needs (Daniels, 2011). There is an uneasy feeling around the U.S. currently of how to best move forward, what's the right response, or who should take charge when considering diversity and cultural concerns. Public institutions may not be able to tackle this problem at large because of the constraints, however, there may be an alternative (Daniels, 2011):

Characteristics of independent schools (a clear focus on quality and achievement, the flexibility to respond to the educational needs of individual students, strong systems of accountability to parents and government and the capacity to recruit high-quality staff) are associated with quality outcomes and these, in turn, contribute to greater equity. (pp. 336-337)

Daniel's (2011) assertion suggested that independent schools could lead the charge in educational equity, cultural proficiency, and so many other systemic inequities in our country. Independent school leaders have the power to change the course of education for the U.S. and the world by addressing our melting pot equity and cultural differences. Paz (2008) described America as the greatest melting pot or better yet, a salad bowl because of the diverse persons and cultures from all around the world, which led to a better America. It is up to independent school leaders to set the tone for an effective school climate and community that welcomes diversity and fosters students' hearts and minds from diverse backgrounds.

Problem Statement

All independent schools need to address school-wide equity practices necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Three independent schools, The Groton School, The Breck School, and the Cranbrook School have publicly described how they are battling educational equity school-wide practices to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence (Maqubela, 2016; Salas, 2002; Snyder & Snyder, 1999). However, the latest

statistics show there are at least 1,500 National Association of Independent School members within the U.S. alone (NAIS, n.d.a). Furthermore, the 2015-2016 National Center for Education Statistics showed there were 34,576 private schools in the United States (NCES, 2015). Additionally, Gous et al. (2014) declared that a broad knowledge base on how inclusion is practiced in schools is not available. The Headmaster of Groton has suggested that independent schools should no longer join the inclusion conversation but propel it forward (Maqubela, 2016).

Independent schools appear to desire fulfilling the needs of diverse populations and achieving educational equity. However, the reality is that marginalized groups continue to face oppressive actions leaving in place systemic barriers that maintain the status quo (K. Brown, 2010; Rose, 2017). Besides, only 33.3% of total U.S. enrollment at independent schools are students of color, which does not reflect society's real diversity (NAIS, 2020). Other barriers such as cost of attendance, navigating the politics, expectations, and the community's beliefs of the independent school system in adopting more school-wide practices with stronger ties to the school's mission and values, have been raised (Adams, 2018). Krüger & Yorke (2010) described the importance of the community's philosophy and its impact on learning. Communities that held diverse learners' growth mindset as sources of potential learning versus potential problems could remove barriers to learning and increase inclusion. If independent schools truly desire to achieve educational equity, then school leadership must examine the barriers to equity first, to understand and decide how to address each barrier moving forward.

Evidence demonstrated the success of inclusive independent education programs, which relies upon the principal's leadership and their abilities to build inclusive communities and environments (Edmunds & Macmillan, 2010). Furthermore, Linton (2013) stated that combined together, equitable leadership, culture, and practice can produce a robust school climate focused

on high achievement for all. These findings suggested that adopting equitable school-wide practices to overcome equity barriers, do not occur without equitable and culturally competent leadership. Equity efforts are not effective without key members of the community supporting the effort, and in independent schools there is no person more important than the Head of school and their leadership (A. N. Brown, 2013). However, specific equitable and culturally competent leadership behaviors necessary were usually not the focus of such literature. Therefore, specific leadership behaviors necessary for achieving equity through diversity, inclusion and cultural competence should be identified.

Three independent schools out of 1500 suggested we did not know how U.S. independent school leaders at large described their school-wide equity practices they utilized to lead their school toward more diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Equally limited was the awareness of barriers independent school leaders faced, and the leadership behaviors that were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. There was limited literature that demonstrated independent school leaders identifying transformational leadership as necessary to improve school practices and advance social justice (Theoharis, 2010; Young, 2015). The school leaders shared a moral obligation to all students and a moral commitment to prod along inclusive and diverse schools. Young (2015) even went on to state that independent school leaders must be agents of social change. Although researchers have found that school leaders possessed the ability to improve equity-enhancing practices transformationally, independent schools were typically not the focus of such literature (Carter, 2020; Theoharis, 2010). Therefore, this study sought to understand how independent school Heads described the school-wide equity practices they were utilizing, barriers they have encountered, and the

leadership behaviors that were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school, through a transformative lens.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this phenomenographic study was to explore how independent Heads of school in Southern California described the school-wide equity practices they were utilizing, barriers they have encountered, and the leadership behaviors that were necessary for achieving diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school.

Research Questions

The three research questions that guided this phenomenographic study were:

1. How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the school-wide equity practices they utilized to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school?
2. How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the barriers they encountered as they addressed school-wide equity practices to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence practices at their school?
3. How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the leadership behaviors they utilized for school-wide equity practices to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence practices at their school?

Theoretical Framework - Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership was first introduced by Downton (1973) to the world of leadership. A few years later, Burns (1978) contributed to transformational leadership and presented the theory in a dichotomous manner, transactional and transformational leadership. It has been shown transformational practices are more significant in school restructuring outcomes

compared to transactional (Leithwood et al., 1991). The restructuring outcomes examined in this study were the school-wide equity practices adopted by the Heads of schools to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. Transformational leadership has also been shown to have higher leaders' ratings in unstable environments (Bass, 1998). Considering the unstable nature of educational equity and the current state of diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence within the U.S., a transformational lens was preferred when addressing school practices, barriers, and leadership behaviors.

Burns (1978) interpreted a transformative leader as one who can raise the level of followers' level of consciousness and motivate them on the importance of desired outcomes and associated processes. The basis of Burn's work on transformational leadership revolved around leaders who raise the level of motivation and morality in both the follower and leader. Rapp (2002) called for school leaders to leave the comforts of professional code and state instructions for riskier waters of higher moral duties. Twenty years later, we are still discussing educational equity as a moral obligation of schools and their leaders. This understanding of moral obligation as a responsibility of school leadership and modeling values was the third reason why transformational leadership was chosen as the theoretical framework of this study (Miron, 1996).

Social justice has not always been the moral imperative of school leaders (Arias, 2009). However, in the 21st-century educational leaders have been called to embrace education as a moral purpose of the highest order (Fullan, 2001). In Ciulla's book, *Ethics, the Heart of Leadership* (2004), James Burns summed up social justice and equality importance within transformational leadership by saying: "Moral values lie at the heart of transforming leadership, which seeks fundamental changes in society, such as the enhancement of individual liberty and the expansion of justice and equality of opportunity" (p. X, foreword).

There are many approaches to transformational leadership that have been created over the years since its inception. There was Burns's (1978) defining a new paradigm, Bennis's (1984) four competencies of leadership, further developed into behavior strategies with Bert Nanus, and Kouzes and Posner's (1987) best leadership behaviors to name a few (Antonakis et al., 2004). For this theoretical approach, the foundation of Bass's (1985) transformational leadership and performance beyond expectations was adopted. A transformational leader raised followers' level of consciousness of institutional values and goals, inspired followers to go above and beyond their interest, and motivated followers to address higher-level needs (Northouse, 2016). Leithwood (1994) expanded upon Bass's work, created his model for school leaders, and stated the four factors, idealized influence, individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation, were crucial for principals in the 21st century. In closing, if we were going to solve the equity problems that continue to persist in independent schools, then we needed transformational Heads of school.

Potential Importance of the Study

If the independent school system was going to change as a whole and address educational equity then it required transformational leadership (Kotter, 2012; Leithwood, 1994). There was limited research on transformational leaders and their effects on school-wide equity practices, barriers encountered and leadership behaviors necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at independent schools. Therefore, this study contributed to the independent school educational equity literature through a transformational leadership lens.

Secondly, the information provided by the Heads of school within this research study informed new school-wide equity practices, barriers to anticipate, and identified important leadership behaviors necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. From

the findings independent schools could adopt new equity practices, anticipate barriers better, and adopt certain leadership behaviors to meet incoming families and students' needs. Few schools like The Groton, School The Breck School, and the Cranbrook School have publicly described how they have battled school-wide equity practices necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Other than these three schools and one research study that explored independent schools' educational equity, the literature was scant school-wide equity practices, barriers encountered, and leadership behaviors necessary in independent schools (Ford, 2017). Therefore, this study contributed more school-wide equity practices, barriers encountered, and leadership behaviors to the independent school literature at large, as told by Heads of school.

Third, this study focused solely on the Head of school's perspectives to draw upon a true authentic independent school leadership picture of the educational equity phenomena where it stands presently. Previous studies, such as Ford (2017) and Romney et al. (2008), focused on diversity directors. The authentic picture considered diversity and was inclusive by nature. The semi-structured interview gave Heads the autonomy to address all demographics: race, sex, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, ableness (abilities/disabilities), immigration status, language, family structure, and or alternative lifestyles (McCrimmon, 2004; NAIS, n.d.b; National Association of Multicultural Education [NAME], 2021). Head's authentic responses shed light on the alignment between the school's equity practices and cultural competence at their school. Furthermore, the authentic snapshot of independent school equity phenomena in Southern California was depicted by giving the Heads the autonomy to answer open-ended questions under their own volition.

Finally, this study is particularly compelling because of the present standing of racial injustice within the United States. The Black Lives Matters movement raised awareness about

police brutality and the systemic racism built within the country. Ford's (2017) study occurred four years before the present-day heightened awareness, and this study shed light on the state educational equity as of 2021 at independent schools in Southern California. Although the public school sector was shown to be quite bureaucratic and may take years to fix, the independent school sector has the autonomy to adopt immediate change because of their independence readily available to cater to diversity and community needs (Daniels, 2011). By creating school-wide equity practices that achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence, independent schools through a transformational lens, school leaders can promote a more accepting and less divisive world to combat systemic racial injustice and be a model for all schools. Furthermore, with knowledge of the real-life equity barriers fused with their leadership behaviors exhibited through the transformational lens, this study aimed to be a framework for all future independent school leaders looking to address educational equity at their institutions.

Definition of Key Terms

- Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC): This acronym ensures that Black and indigenous populations are specified when referring to people of color (Cabral, 2021).
- Cultural competence: creating alignment between personal values and behaviors with the school's policies and practices to enable healthy and productive diverse and cultural interactions through diversity, inclusion, and multiculturalism (Lindsey et al., 2018).
- Cultural proficiency: a leader who advocated for life-long growth with the purpose of being increasingly effective in service to the educational needs of all diverse cultural groups. Maintaining a vision that the leader and school are the harbingers for creating a socially just democracy (Lindsey et al., 2018).

- Diversity: considers one's social class, ethnicity, and language background when considering the constituent demographics of the school (Min & Goff, 2016).
- Educational equity: fairness and inclusion within independent schools, in which they provide quality education for all, ensuring inclusion as the basic standard for every student and understanding personal and social circumstances are not obstacles to learning outcomes (Kyriakides et al., 2019).
- Equity barriers: any hurdle or roadblock to providing a school-wide equity practice, program, policy, service, drive, structure, curriculum, or personnel at the independent school.
- Head of School: a Head of school or title equivalent was the highest-ranking authority at an independent school, other than the Board members.
- Idealized influence: how followers view the leader's power and confidence if they lead with a moral purpose and display behaviors centered on that moral purpose, values, and beliefs (Bass & Avolio, 1995, as cited in Antonakis et al., 2004).
- Inclusion: removing the pressures of exclusion for students in the independent school setting by creating a situation where no individual child is different, or all children are different (Jóhannesson, 2006).
- Individual consideration: developing and demonstrating care and concern for followers (Bass & Avolio, 1995, as cited in Antonakis et al., 2004).
- Inspirational motivation: communicating a vision and motivating followers with confidence in achieving that vision (Bass & Avolio, 1995, as cited in Antonakis et al., 2004).

- Intellectual stimulation: encouraging followers to seek new solutions and alternative perspectives (Bass & Avolio, 1995, as cited in Antonakis et al, 2004).
- Leadership behavior: any quality, trait, characteristic, attribute, or specific action demonstrated by the Head of school.
- Multiculturalism: pluralistic approach to teaching education that considered gender equity, alternative lifestyles, cultural competence, educational opportunities, religious diversity, socioeconomic diversity, ethnic issues, and racial issues (McCrimmon, 2004).
- People of color (POC): refers to populations of people that are non-white (Cabral, 2021).
- School-wide equity practice: any practice manipulated by the Heads of school's leadership or position (i.e., practices, programs, policies, services, drives, structures, curriculum, personnel) at their school.

Delimitations

This study was delimited to Southern California independent schools only within the CAIS network, Los Angeles Association of Independent Schools (LAIS), or NAIS. The CAIS, LAIS, or NAIS Southern California independent schools may have given an accurate representation of southern California independent schools and were potentially generalizable to the rest of the country's independent NAIS schools. Descriptions of the school-wide equity practices, barriers encountered, and leadership behaviors necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence were solely examined through the perspective of Heads of school or title equivalent. Heads' perspectives were chosen because they were likely the most knowledgeable person on their school-wide equity practices. Furthermore, they were typically the most important person in driving change and approving school-wide equity practices at their school. Lastly, the study was delimited to Heads with at least three years of experience. The

more years of experience, the more knowledgeable the Heads were likely to be of their school-wide equity practices, barriers encountered, and leadership behaviors necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school.

Limitations

There were a few limitations that were related to this study regarding independent schools. The first was that there were only so many independent schools in Southern California: CAIS, LAIS and NAIS member schools. The relatively low number of potential schools and the unknown of years of experience for each Head also limited the study. A second limitation was that the study only identified and questioned one individual, the Head of school at each independent school. The amount of information obtained, seen through only one perspective, was a limiting factor. The third limitation was that the study's only source of gathering data stemmed from a semi-structured interview protocol. With just one main source of data, the researcher did not use triangulation to enhance trustworthiness. Furthermore, there were no in-person observations of the school, which would have been a way to validate the findings and create more reliable results. A fourth limitation was that the study focused only on Southern California independent schools and did not have any inclusionary or exclusionary institutional criteria for the diverse offerings of independent schools in the area. This suggested that the results may not be generalizable or transferable to specific institutional criteria: single-sex, religious affiliated, boarding, or public schools. Lastly, the literature on independent school Heads' descriptions of school-wide equity practices, the barriers encountered, and leadership skills necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence was scant.

Assumptions

This study made the following assumptions, which may have affected the validity of the results. The first assumption was that the Head of school was likely the most knowledgeable person on the school-wide equity practices they utilized, barriers encountered, and the leadership behaviors that were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. This study also assumed that the Head of school accurately portrayed and described the school-wide equity practices they utilized, barriers they have encountered, and the leadership behaviors that were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. Their descriptions were gathered during a semi-structured interview protocol. The semi-structured interview and question protocol was assumed to produce enough credible and dependable results to analyze how the independent Heads of school in Southern California described their school-wide equity practices they utilized, barriers encountered, and the leadership behaviors that were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. The researcher also assumed that the Head of school or position equivalent answered interview questions honestly and accurately. This study's last assumption was that the Head of school's leadership influenced the school-wide equity practices they utilized, barriers encountered, and the leadership behaviors that were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school.

Organization of Study

Chapters have arranged this study. Chapter 1 provided the study's background information, a problem and purpose statement, importance of the study, research questions, definition of key terms, delimitations, limitations, and assumptions regarding educational equity in independent schools. Chapter 2 offers the theoretical framework and reviews the literature on

educational equity, and school-wide equity practices schools utilized, barriers encountered, and the leadership behaviors that were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used in the paper, the process used to identify participants, ensuring their confidentiality, and how data was collected, measured, and analyzed. Chapter 4 provides the presentation and the analysis of the data collected. The last chapter, Chapter 5, summarizes the study, discusses the findings, and offers conclusions and recommendations for further study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 2 discussed the relevant information in the literature regarding independent schools and the educational equity school-wide practices, barriers encountered, and leadership behaviors that were necessary to lead a school toward diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. The chapter reviewed the historical background of independent schools first. Following the historical background of independent schools is the explanation of the theoretical framework. The vast majority of the chapter included an in-depth exploration of the literature regarding school-wide equity practices, barriers encountered, and leadership behaviors that were necessary to lead a school toward diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence.

Historical Background

The term independent school was relatively new terminology in describing educational institutions. The private school system changed the vocabulary because of the plethora of negativity surrounding the word private. Private school was the traditional term and the one that most people still recognize today. However, the word private is essentially viewed as bad with negative associations and an elitist mentality (Sizer, 2008). Sizer (2008) said the word private essentially translates to, if you are not a tennis club member, you do not dare to enter. Cheshire (2009) described that because they attended private school, they were privileged. The privilege of private school was seen as elitist and against public school.

On the other hand, the term independent lessened the appearance of exclusiveness, altered the self-consciousness, and was often accompanied by a lighthearted conversation of inquiry (Sizer, 2008). Usually, the dialogue began with, “What type of school is that?” Then followed by, “What are you independent of?” Independent schools are governed by a Board of Trustees (Board) and can hire and fire according to their own will. Independent schools adapted

their curriculum, assessments, teaching strategies, policies, mission, and philosophy.

Independent schools were independent of mandatory attendance that state-accredited schools are bound to. However, independent schools did have their accreditation processes, that may include public sector accreditors. Because independent schools' accreditation process outcomes were critical regarding their standing, they had to do their best to accept all accrediting committee members and their recommendations for future improvements.

One of the independent school systems' successes was supporting students of color in their academic success and creating opportunities for them to affirm their racial identity (Datnow & Cooper, 1997). However, without knowledgeable teachers, students of color and other marginalized students may have suffered. Farkas et al. (1990) asserted that the importance of student and teacher background characteristics and cultures precedes building student habits, skills, and styles. Farkas et al. (1990) showed how students' mere non-cognitive factors (i.e., race, ethnicity, or sex) could alter student achievement. In considering this, independent schools drove their success by attracting culturally and professionally knowledgeable teachers to build excellent habits, skills, and styles, and early powerful interventions when diverse students began to fall behind (Bassett, 2008).

There were many benefits for both teachers and students at independent schools. For example, independent schools did not require certified teachers that were deemed high quality and highly qualified. The independence from the public governance granted independent schools' freedom to hire any candidate determined most fitting for the position. Therefore, independent schools hired any candidate of their choosing, regardless of any specific licensure or educational background history. Independent schools granted employees days off to seek professional development (PD) anytime or anywhere, either in groups or individual adventures.

Typically, requested PD's only needed teacher advocacy or justification of the event. There was no paperwork, bureaucracy, or red tape associated, and there was no specific set fund amount allocated. If the independent administrator agreed with the idea, even if it is on the same day, they could grant it. The independent institution's spontaneity and PD support asserted that the teachers were valued, and motivated teachers to do their best. In addition to faculty growth opportunities, frequent diagnostic testing was available for students in independent schools that lag. Extra assistance was also available, for example, subject specialists were often available to assist students throughout their daily curricular requirements. These were just a few reasons why independent schools contained unique opportunities.

Independent schools' mission statements offered a unique opportunity to tell their story and separated them from their competition. The Commission on Independent Schools of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) concluded that mission statements guided the school and told its reason for existence (NEASC, n.d.). In public schools, students most often attended the school within the closest proximity to where they reside. However, in independent schools, families were often looking for schools' beliefs and characteristics that were in line with their values. Parents drove the extra distance for a philosophy that resonated with their personal philosophy. This was why independent schools fill their mission statements with characteristics they thought families were interested in (Gow, 2009). A school's mission statement was typically an expression of the school's beliefs, but the impact was visible in every school aspect. Gow (2009) suggested independent school's missions served as a marketing tool, but also had to contain flexible language, readily available to change, to meet market demands.

The mission statement even had the power to affect retention rates. To keep students year after year, clear communication, and having a sound mission, were two factors that have been

found to impact student retention (Ahlstrom, 2013). There had to be compatibility between the school's mission statement and its programs, policies, core values, planning, and the decision-making at both governance, and operational levels (AISNE, n.d.; NEASC, n.d.). In short, what the school said they were doing and what the school actually did, must parallel one another. If the school fell short in that assignment, they likely faced headwinds from both accreditors and potential families. Accreditors would assign the school to a probationary period, and as a result families would have likely begun to resort to other options.

Independent schools have addressed one major headwind within their mission statements: racial diversity and multiculturalism (Blackburn & Wise, 2009). Although many independent schools have addressed this issue, it was still up to the school's commitment to operationalize diversity and multiculturalism within the daily routine. Blackburn and Wise (2009) stated that families were hesitant to enroll unless the school was fully committed to families of color and multicultural backgrounds. Therefore, if a school stated diversity, inclusion, cultural competence, and acceptance of others, it had to demonstrate those values within school-wide equity practices.

If 21st-century independent schools do not fully embrace diversity and multiculturalism, a likely outcome is a diminished applicant pool. As a result, the pressure would burgeon the admissions department. Gow (2009) demonstrated this by stating that parents were looking for schools that provided students with alternative perspectives of understanding the world. Diversity, inclusion, and culturally competent perspectives are virtually limitless, and addressing educational equity school aspects were longed for by 21st century parents. Maqubela (2016) stated that inclusion was what every parent wanted for their child at school or on a playground. Parents desire to send their children to a school that prepares them for the world they will inherit post-education (Maqubela, 2016). This meant creating diverse communities where children of all

ethnicities, religions, races, sexual orientations, disabilities, socioeconomic statuses, languages, nationalities, genders, family structures, and alternative lifestyles were educated together.

Maqubela was the Head of The Groton School, and in 2014, Maqubela and their board adopted the GRAIN campaign. GRAIN stood for Groton Affordability and Inclusion. The GRAIN campaign became their number one strategic priority, which froze tuition for three years, and drastically increased financial aid. It guaranteed all applicants would be considered regardless of their socioeconomic status. Groton's tuition dropped from the most expensive to number 14 in the Association of Business Officers of Private Schools after just one year of frozen tuition. Maqubela (2016) asserted that one of this campaign's purposes was to send a shockwave throughout the independent school sector and generate discussion throughout the educational community. As a result of GRAIN, one other school froze tuition, and others were looking for alternative ways to slow tuition growth (Maqubela, 2016). The overall objective of the campaign was stated as "to build the most talented and inclusive community possible, an accomplishment that would benefit every member of the community and, perhaps someday, might even benefit the world" (Maqubela, 2016, p. 34).

Maqubela (2016) urged all independent schools to examine all school-wide practices through the lens of inclusion. The Groton school GRAIN campaign resulted from examining school-wide practices that address diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence needs at their school. Therefore, fundraising and campaigns were educational equity school-wide practices that addressed the impetus of diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence in independent schools. However, other educational equity school-wide practices were available that addressed the new momentum of independent school diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence, which this study will explore.

Theoretical Framework: Transformational Leadership

Maqubela (2016) firmly stated that it was no longer suitable to solely have a conversation, but rather independent schools had to begin to propel the diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence movement forward. Therefore, this paper sought to accomplish just that by adopting a transformational leadership theoretical framework.

Historical Perspective

Burns (1978) presented two political theories of leadership: transactional and transformational. Burns (1978) described transactional leadership as when leadership takes the initiative to approach others to exchange something of value. This compliance exchange could be a school leader coming to a teacher to take on a new responsibility, such as a school-wide practice. Transactional leaders influenced teachers because it was in their best interest to do what the school leader asked (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). Burns (1978) described transformational leadership as much more than just compliance, adding that it shifted the followers' beliefs, needs, and values. Burns said that transformational leadership was a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation of followers resulting in transformation leaders and potential future leaders converted to moral agents. In other words, the school leader, or moral agent, always supported the evolution of other school leaders, affecting real change (Burns, 1978).

Bass (1985) gave Burns (1978) one of the major criticisms of transformational leadership. Bass (1985) stated that Burns's (1978) dichotomous view of transformational leadership and transactional leadership independent continuums was not entirely accurate. Instead, Bass (1985) found that leaders demonstrated various transactional and transformational leadership patterns on one continuum, not separated, conceptually and empirically. Fullan (2001) reiterated a single continuum sentiment by stating management and leadership overlap, and both

qualities were necessary. Bass (1985) summed up his view by emphasizing the best leaders were both transactional and transformational. As a result of these findings, Bass (1985) provided a single continuum of transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and laissez-faire leadership known as non-transactional leadership. In his model, Bass (1985) disseminated several factors school leaders can exhibit in non-transactional leadership, transactional leadership, and transformational leadership approaches.

Non-transactional and Transactional Leadership

The far-right side of Bass's (1985) transformational-transactional continuum was the laissez-faire or non-transactional leadership approach. Laissez-faire leadership reflects the absence of leadership where the school leader does not give feedback, abdicates responsibility, delays decisions, and does not help followers meet objectives (Northouse, 2016). Next on the continuum, transactional leadership, included school leadership that provided rewards as a result of completed tasks. Two distinct factors of transactional leadership described by Bass (1985) were contingent reward and management-by-exception. Contingent rewards were the exchange process for rewarding faculty for their effort and support. A contingent reward for a teacher was a stipend for facilitating a newly adopted club toward the school's equity mission. Overall, transactional school leaders clarified the expectations to the faculty, who then had to accomplish the organization's mission and goals set by the leader (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).

Management-by-exception involved corrective criticism, negative reinforcement, or negative feedback when faculty deviated from expectations or failed in meeting the goal (Northouse, 2016). The management-by-exception had two forms: active and passive (Bass & Avolio, 1994). A school leader that adopted an active form of management-by-exception leadership approach micromanaged. The school leader observed faculty closely for mistakes and

took corrective action. On the other hand, a school leader that adopted a passive form of management-by-exception leadership only intervened after the goals fell short or problems developed (Northouse, 2016).

Transactional leadership as an entity only maintained a behaviorist point of view (Khan, 2017). This meant the point of view rested solely on the exchange of human activity, for example when the school leader asked a faculty member to complete a task. Khan (2017) pointed out criticisms of that approach, most notably the motivation, praise, and incentivization provided by the school leader to faculty was fundamentally satisfactory. The fundamentally satisfactory transactional leadership failed to go above and beyond set expectations, lacked encouragement of higher achievement levels, or did not fully develop others (Khan, 2017; Northouse, 2016). However, transactional leadership was intertwined with transformational leadership (Avolio, 1999). Transformational leaders utilized transactional practices every day to transform the organization and propelled it forward (Avolio, 1999).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership was indicative of leaders that held higher expectations and went above and beyond set goals. Sergiovanni (2001) described that in contrast to transactional leadership, transformational leadership consisted of leaders and followers working together to achieve higher-level goals. Transformational leadership exceeded transactional leadership by helping school faculty understand problems rather than just providing a to-do list and behaviorist perspective (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). Transformational leaders were concerned with the behavioral component but were equally concerned with integrating the cognitive and emotional elements to improve culture and school environment. Some higher-order cognitive and emotional components that the leader focuses on were esteem, self-fulfillment, and self-actualization found

in Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. Focusing on esteem, self-fulfillment, and self-actualization raised awareness and attention to outcomes that the leader desired. Increased awareness and engagement promoted innovation and increased achievement of goals, such as realizing educational equity (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). In addition to esteem, self-fulfillment, and self-actualization, transformative school leaders modeled altruism, service, fairness, and honesty and raised followers' consciousness of these values (Engelbrecht & Murray, 1995). Adopting these transformational values and working together, doing their best, school leaders and school constituencies shaped their schools in new directions (Sergiovanni, 2001).

With a new direction like educational equity, there will be roadblocks and speed bumps along the way. Bass (1998) understood that followers were likely to make many mistakes, but transformative school leaders fostered followers' growth, understanding, and empowerment. Promoting the constituency's development, empowering them, and increasing their capacity was accomplished by distributing leadership and responsibility associated with transformational leadership. In return, the school constituencies' newly acquired capability enhanced the institution's environment and culture, producing transformation. U.S. school leaders have begun to improve organizational behavior by distributing leadership throughout the school constituencies (Baal, 2011). This shift in school leadership of relinquishing control and building a community of relationships indicated transformational leadership. School leaders have used the four factors of transformational leadership; idealized influence (charisma), individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation, to improve school culture and environment toward more educational equity. Leithwood (1994) noticed the importance of these four factors of transformational leaders, noting that they were essential for 21st-century principals to meet the future challenges of diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence

(Marzano et al., 2001). If the school leader demonstrated these four factors, then the school leader was a transformative leader.

The first of four factors of a transformative leader were idealized influence. Idealized influence was the school leader's communication and impact on school constituencies toward the vision and mission of the school. School leaders that demonstrated idealized leadership instilled pride, respect, trust, and admiration within all school constituencies (Bass, 1985). School leaders that demonstrated idealized leadership were also strong role models that led by example and provided a clear mission and vision (White & Smith, 2012). School leaders who adopted these characteristics transformed their fellow school constituencies into higher levels of consciousness and personal values by showing them were able to accomplish their goals (Bass, 1990).

The second factor of a transformative leader was individualized consideration. Individual consideration was the leader's ability to support, develop, coach, and mentor school constituencies. As a result of individual consideration, there was an increased commitment from the following school constituencies because they understood personal needs were being met (Bass, 1998). A school leader demonstrating individual consideration understood each school member's uniqueness and assisted them in achieving their desired intrinsic needs (Horwitz et al., 2008).

The third factor of a transformative leader was intellectual stimulation. Intellectual stimulation was the alteration of thinking within followers that occurred as they reacted to the leader's intellectual stimulation (Bass, 1985). School leaders who were innovative and challenged school constituencies to think outside of the box with alternative ideas indicated an intellectually stimulating leader (B. Harper, 2016). Simultaneously, school leaders stimulated followers to challenge their own beliefs, leaders, and organization (Northouse, 2016).

Intellectually stimulating school leaders showed encouragement and support without criticism of unique solutions regardless of the outcome. To encourage the best individual solutions, leaders intellectually stimulated their school constituencies to ensure their strengths were utilized.

The fourth factor of a transformative leader was inspirational motivation. Inspirational motivation was when the leader adequately and passionately communicated the vision, mission, values, expectations, and philosophy and the degree to which they created enthusiasm and urgency within the followers towards that goal (Bass, 1985). Branch (2019) stated that an inspirational school leader clearly understood school constituencies' emotions, led with love, used motivational language, and held high expectations of a vision that included excellence and success. In doing so, the school constituencies eventually saw excellence and success for themselves (Bass et al., 2003). The inspirational school leader always spoke with optimism about the future and provided meaning for the task at hand for everyone (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

To summarize, schools were complex, diverse organizations with many influences ultimately toward the pinnacle goal, student learning and success. Management skills associated with transactional leadership were not satisfactory for success all alone. However, combined with transformational leadership, schools created an equitable learning environment that promoted student achievement in schools of diversity (Flamini, 2010). Leaders that were enthusiastic, passionate, and hopeful promoted a moral purpose, such as attaining educational equity, more significantly (Kanold, 2002). However, it was necessary to foster that moral purpose with all constituencies for proper transformation (Baal, 2011). Transformational leadership theory was used to study the relationships between leaders and followers within organizations that produced better work (Bass, 1985). Therefore, this study used a

transformational leadership framework to examine educational equity practices within independent schools described by their leader, the Head of school.

The Head of school represented all constituencies and was the voice of the relationships amongst the independent school. Leithwood and Poplin (1992) stated a transformational leadership approach provided a school the right incentive for leaders to improve their practice. If independent schools were going to give the right incentives and practices to address educational equity in their schools, adopting a transformational leadership approach was essential. Furthermore, although transformational leadership was fitting for a school facing a significant change, such as educational equity, there was relatively thin empirical evidence regarding transformational leadership and its effects on the school context (Leithwood, 2004). Therefore, this study tried to answer Maqubela's (2016) call to propel educational equity further and described transformational leadership and its effects on school-wide equity practices, barriers encountered, and leadership behaviors that were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence in independent schools.

School-wide Equity Practices

The next section explored the educational equity school-wide practices independent schools utilized to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. For this study, a school-wide practice was considered anything that was manipulated by the school's leadership (i.e., practices, programs, policies, services, drives, structures, curriculum, personnel). The literature came from both public and independent schools. Public sector school-wide practices supplemented the relatively thin literature regarding independent schools and their educational equity school-wide practices to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence.

Introduction to School-wide Equity Practices

Diversity within the independent school system demanded a global perspective and critical need to move toward more equitable ideologies and practices (Ford, 2017). However, there was scant diversity research on independent school leadership, which called for evidence-based research on leadership plans for equity. Ford (2017) implored independent school leaders to intensely, honestly, and intentionally examine and alter their school-wide equity practices to create an equitable environment for those who have been historically marginalized. Ford (2017) was not the only educational leader to call for examining and altering school-wide equity practices. NAIS (n.d.b) expected independent schools to create diverse, inclusive, equitable, and just environments that welcomed all. That work required commitment, reflection, intentional planning and action, and accountability through diverse and fluid equitable practices within the dynamic school context (Ford, 2017; NAIS, n.d.b).

If schools wanted to address their students' diverse needs, prepare them for the real-world, and teach them to be moral agents, schools had to become more diverse and inclusive by using an array of school-wide practices (Denevi & Richards, 2009; Marblo, 2007). Independent schools raised awareness of embracing diversity and concerting efforts that ensure an equitable school community through supportive and developmental practices (Brosnan, 2012). Equitable school communities helped ameliorate diverse school constituencies' coexistence and interrelationships through equitable practices (Ford, 2017). One such practice was adopting a diversity personnel role or committee (Romney et al., 2008). Another way that enhanced awareness and support of educational equity was through school training, where students developed their skills through cultural competency, leadership, and sensitivity necessary for their future (Ford, 2017).

Independent schools addressed equity by way of school-wide practices, through campaigns, scholarships, and fundraisers (Maqubela, 2016; Synder & Snyder, 1999). Campaigns, scholarships, and fundraisers appeared to be in line with the schools' mission and focus. Kaufman (2003) touched upon the school's mission's importance by stating that the school Board and Head focused on diversity and designed a comprehensive plan as key institutional strategies for achieving equity. Schools were urged to reconsider their philosophy, mission, and physical plant through a strategic plan to address equity and attract diverse families (Blackburn & Wise, 2009). The importance of strategic plans had been encouraged for years, unfortunately many independent schools have steered away. Torres (2015) identified that only 45% of participating independent schools had a formal strategic diversity plan.

Diverse families sought a school containing diverse and competent constituencies. Brosnan (2012) stated that independent schools accomplish diverse and competent constituencies by having skilled teaching in responsive classrooms, diverse administration that was competent in running an inclusive school, and a demographically diverse student and family population that contributed to the equity culture climate. The skilled teaching responsive classroom involved teachers practicing multicultural literacy curriculum. Unfortunately, there was a disconnect between schools' cultural aspirational standards and the competencies adopted and embedded in the curriculum (Sander et al., 2016). Competencies taught did not meet schools' aspirational standards, and if schools were to strive for authentic inclusion, the curriculum had to be the cornerstone for character development, including multiple perspectives from diverse cultures and contexts (Witte, 2013).

Community-based partnerships, programs, and PDs are the last school-wide equity practices appearing in the literature that independent schools utilized to achieve diversity,

inclusion, and cultural competence. Schools used outside partnerships and collaborations to help raise awareness and support of their equity mission. If independent schools embraced these educational equity school-wide practices, they set themselves up for excellence and were an attractive option for diverse students and families (Brosnan, 2012). By examining the aforementioned school-wide practices, independent schools shifted impractical methods to equity producing practices, called the educational equity excellence calling (Ford, 2017).

The next section dissected the literature of each educational equity school-wide practice independent schools utilized to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. The six themes were raising Awareness & Providing Support; Capital Campaigns, Scholarships, and Fundraisers; Philosophy, Mission, & Physical Plant; Constituency Diversity & Knowledge; Curriculum & Instruction; and Community Based Partnerships, Programs & Professional Developments.

Raising Awareness and Providing Support

Raising awareness for diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence played a vital role at independent schools. The awareness was deep-rooted into their acceptance of the world around them (Sarraj et al., 2015). Sarraj et al. (2015) asserted that although students may have prior cultural competence, diverse cultural stories shared in class broadened their understanding of these elements. When schools heightened awareness and support for diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence, the students and teachers benefited. Schools that adopted an awareness of other cultures and groups enhanced constituencies' knowledge and made it easier to respect and appreciate different cultures (Sarraj et al., 2015). The National Association of Multicultural Education (NAME) depicted schools raising awareness and providing support through

multicultural literate school constituencies and communities that supported multiple perspectives, experiences, and democracy (NAME, 2021).

Increased awareness and support were not limited for just students and teachers. Researchers have also identified that parents' culture and cultural pride socialization messages led to higher self-esteem and peer self-esteem (Johnston et al., 2007; S. Marshall, 1995). Independent schools that fostered an educational equity environment laid the foundation for all constituencies' conversations within the community about equity, social justice, diversity and inclusion, both inside and outside of school (Ford, 2017). Schools raised awareness and supported all constituencies several ways; created a school climate where tough conversations occurred, hosted special events, brought in special diversity speakers, adopted affinity groups, provided safe spaces, fostered student-led groups and activities, and dispensed climate surveys and workshops for faculty and families. An example of a student-led program that addressed inclusion awareness and support was the peer-buddy program in Cooper-Duffy (2008). The programs facilitated effective inclusion of all the students, required collaboration and team building in the school and community, and created relationships between students with and without disabilities, mimicking the real world (Cooper-Duffy, 2008). These types of school-wide practices and programs raise awareness, enable courageous conversations, increase dialogue, and dismantle stereotypes and biases associated with diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence (Ford, 2017).

Christie and Vuchic (2000) provided learners with goals to develop motivation and nurtured awareness and appreciation of worldwide beliefs. Perhaps the most common way schools fostered diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence was through PD. According to independent diversity leaders, PD was one of the chief elements to supporting positive cultural

change (Ford, 2017). Furthermore, Walton et al. (2009) stated that teachers should assume practical training that enhances strategies facilitating inclusion and improves their knowledge and understanding of the barriers with learning. One independent school, The Breck School, mandated faculty to be involved in ongoing training surrounding prejudice reduction, cultural curriculum development, diversity, and created an open-school climate of acceptance (Salas, 2002). In another study, Göransson et al. (2013) discussed the faculty and their vivid, continuous improvement discussions that promoted a didactic nature and involved questioning inclusion ideologies.

Professional developments improved language learning and cultural competence in marginalized groups, like LGBTQIA+, and better interrelationships through facilitated discourse at independent schools (Ford, 2017; Zehr, 2003). Although these outcomes were openly welcomed, one diversity leader contended PD's and training had to be intentional and maintain an inclusive approach to equity, rather than the nebulous nature often experienced (Ford, 2017). Intentional work regarding equity was tedious, and as one school leader depicted, the difficulty of equity work was not solely his responsibility to support an equitable community's hard work, but rather everybody. Schools were able to distribute the difficult and time-consuming work through multiple personnel. Ford (2017) implored independent schools to create diversity personnel roles and committees to tackle independent schools' equity. Romney et al. (2008) confirmed how invaluable a diversity director was to an independent school and their commitment to diversity and multiculturalism in the 21st century.

Overall, professional developments allowed teachers and other school community members to experience and build capacity that catalyzed transformations in their practices, resulting in increased student success (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). If schools desired

students to value and discuss the importance of educational equity, then independent school leaders had to provide professional development for school faculty and school community members to allow for continuous learning. As Synder and Snyder (1999) showed, there was increased openness and sensitivity to multiple perspectives when there was unwavering support from the top. Many independent schools understood this leadership concept and already incorporated inclusive practices to support and accommodate diversity awareness (Walton et al., 2009). In return, school constituencies were equipped with the tools to address equity.

Financially Raised and Funded Programs

One of the school-wide practices that independent schools have tried to address diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence in their community was through capital campaigns, scholarships, and fundraisers. Capital campaigns, scholarships, and fundraisers all focused on raising money and funding programs to address educational equity to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence within the school community.

One of the first capital campaigns that an independent school adopted to address educational equity to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence was the Cranbrook School's Horizons program in 1965. The Horizons program demonstrated how independent schools can reach out to the economically disadvantaged, developing a stronger sense of mission, and transform an exclusive school building with bonds of an inclusive community (Snyder & Snyder, 1999). The campaign created a more diverse learning environment at Cranbrook, combining students of poverty and color, with students of privilege who were predominantly white. In Snyder and Snyder (1999), a major donor described going to an inclusive school where his friends had been struck by poverty and urban violence as the reason for his one-million-dollar

gift to Cranbrook. The donor stated that his experience at Cranbrook helped him see the country's problems, not as someone else's, but in fact, his too (Synder & Synder, 1999).

Similarly, in 2014, the Groton School adopted GRAIN, which stood for Groton Affordability and INclusion. Temba Maqubela, the Head of school, described this campaign as the new number one strategic initiative at Groton (Maqubela, 2016). Groton School had risen to the most expensive independent school in the area, and this initiative had specific goals to address inclusion. The initiative froze tuition for three years, increased the number of students on financial aid, and guaranteed the consideration of all applications regardless of their financial background (Maqubela, 2016). The Head of school questioned how independent school students experienced an authentic, real-world experience, if students from low-socioeconomic status were omitted from the population. Shortly after, GRAIN was initiated, and an alumnus who felt excluded as a student, donated one million dollars to the campaign (Maqubela, 2016). This donation, along with the contribution to The Cranbrook School, demonstrated that alumni value educational equity and were willing to dig deep into their pockets for diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence.

It was commonplace for independent schools to have annual fundraisers and scholarships for diversity purposes. Göransson et al. (2013) demonstrated that special support to families was given in the form of individual tuition. Independent schools' financial support dated back to at least 1963. Parkman (1963) illustrates independent schools offering assistance to promising students who were economically disadvantaged to afford the school's tuition or for expensive programmatic school trips (Ford, 2017). A more recent example, The Making Waves fundraiser, offered financial assistance to students from low-income families to receive academic support and attendance into independent schools and assistance into colleges (Zehr, 2003). Ford (2017)

also supported the notion that independent schools often used financial aid funding to assist families who possessed limited financial resources concerning affordability and access. Denevi and Richards (2009) postulated that schools should conduct an evaluation and reconsider which populations they helped, to provide access to all diverse groups, for true equity. As the United States became more diverse, schools needed to determine how they provided access to attract, recruit and retain new diverse families as tuitions continued to rise (Denevi & Richards, 2009).

Therefore, another way independent schools achieved educational equity was by adopting capital campaigns, fundraisers and scholarships that increased diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Furthermore, schools evaluated the populations they served and were actively recruiting for realizing true educational equity.

Philosophy, Mission, and Physical Plant

Families of the 21st-century desired schools with mission statements and philosophies that resonated with their own. Both significant donors in the GRAIN and Horizons campaigns demonstrated a deep-rooted value of educational equity that desired diversity, inclusion, and culturally competent education. It was the alumni's founding principle for such generous gifts. The alumni thought process aligned with Gow's (2009) statement that parents drove the extra distance for a mission and philosophy that resonated with their own. It also suggested that independent schools should adopt mission statements and philosophies that align with what parents desired and what values alumni donated towards (Gow, 2009). As previously mentioned, Blackburn and Wise (2009) stated that addressing racial diversity and multiculturalism in mission statements and philosophies was somewhat problematic for independent schools. Some independent schools addressed this issue in their mission statements and philosophy, moreover, remained fully committed to families of color and multicultural backgrounds by operationalizing

it throughout the daily routine (Blackburn & Wise, 2009). Ford (2017) called remaining fully committed, walking the talk, that required intentional actions on behalf of the leadership at every level.

Many independent schools have developed and implemented mission statements that aimed to align with the values of their community. For example, Groton adopted the philosophy and mission of building the most talented and inclusive community possible in hopes of benefiting every community member and, perhaps someday, the world (Maqubala, 2016).

Another Headmaster at The Breck School in Minnesota described a school philosophy change to their diversity destination by adopting three goals: teaching perspective and developing skills to view someone else's viewpoint; teaching students to function in a diverse society; and teaching students how to effectively make a change in our society (Salas, 2002). The Headmaster stated that Breck's mission and values continued to be academic excellence, diversity, and promotion of values (Salas, 2002). Having institutional commitment from school leadership and the board to educational equity yielded a message of acceptance to the entire community (Marblo, 2007).

Other leaders in Ford (2017) spoke about a commitment to socioeconomic diversity, affordability, and created a culture of full participation. Maintaining such a commitment of educational equity and shared philosophy of diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence seemed to improve success (Romney et al., 2008)

In addition to the school's mission and philosophy, the physical plant and overall atmosphere addressed diversity, inclusion, and multicultural needs too. Walton et al. (2009) stated that schools should construct accessible facilities for students who experience learning barriers. Accessible schools were an attractive aspect to families with members that needed special assistance. Community members that came often to spectate should have accessible

school functions such as sports games and school performances that happened weekly. Schools that have taken measures to accommodate families with special assistance were seen favorably in the school decision process.

Constituency Diversity and Knowledge

Göransson et al. (2013) stated that education's primary purpose is to foster pupils' personal development and help attain an equal and equitable society. Furthermore, Ganley et al. (2019) found that US students have positive outcomes regarding geo-cultural knowledge and receptiveness when having diverse teachers as instructors. These findings indicated that having diverse teachers was a cost-effective way to help students increase cultural knowledge and intercultural competencies (Ganley et al., 2019). The founders of the Horizons program, Ben and Margo Snyder shed light on diverse faculty and its importance in independent schools. Snyder and Snyder (1999) firmly stated that the school was in a much better place with the Horizons program's adoption and the faculty and administration diversity that followed.

Ford (2017) argued that families desired constituency diversity in independent schools because students of color needed to see themselves in the teachers and the student body. If students did not see other students and teachers like them racially or ethnically, it could have led to isolation feelings. Additionally, the students sought to see similar racial or ethnic teachers as role models. Understanding that, one school leader in Ford (2017) stated how committing to faculty diversity was an area of great opportunity to address equity. However, independent schools might have wanted to focus their efforts on more than just a diverse student body and teachers. Promoting constituency diversity was suitable for the independent school and required determination and commitment from the Head of school and Board (Marblo, 2007).

Furthermore, if education's primary purpose was to foster pupils' development, and students best learn in racially heterogeneous learning environments, the school should have promoted diverse constituencies (Gurin, 1999). Independent schools promoted diverse constituencies through attracting engaging and knowledgeable parents, international teachers, a mental health professional, and diverse racial and ethnic faculty (Ford, 2017; Ganley et al., 2019; Van Hoof & Hansen, 1999). The diverse constituencies should have been intended for educational equity and the well-being of the students.

According to the NAME, multicultural education required a racially, linguistically, and culturally diverse school faculty (2021). NAME (2021) stated that multicultural education demanded culturally competent faculty, who were necessary for delivering an effective instructional program to all students (Jairrels, 1999). Diverse school constituencies brought an array of expertise and competence, and their narratives supported and provided insight to others in the community, most notably the students (Griffiths, 2013). If diverse school constituencies were limited, schools should have, at a minimum, focused on professional developments (PDs) for their constituencies. PDs were important in developing awareness and understanding of educational equity and cultural competence, school constituencies current knowledge and experience matters (Romney et al., 2008).

Perhaps the most essential constituency where knowledge and experience mattered, the teachers, significantly influenced the students' daily learning (Pollard, 2013). If teachers helped students acquire human values of equity and justice necessary, and built upon the diverse students' unique characteristics, then teachers had to be multiculturally literate and embrace diverse families supportive of an array of perspectives necessary for a 21st century citizen. (Kaufman, 2003; Marblo, 2007; NAME, 2021). In sum, diversity experience mattered and

contributed to success (Romney et al., 2008). Therefore, if independent schools sought diverse and competent constituencies for their community, they likely created a more equitable atmosphere and culture.

Curriculum and Instruction

The promotion and development of a culturally responsible and responsive curriculum were one of NAME's six facets necessary for multicultural education (NAME, 2021). Addressing educational equity to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence through curriculum and instruction was not uncommon. Romney et al. (2008) suggested that if schools were to develop an all-inclusive school community, curriculum must have supported inclusion with clear policies and a multicultural perspective. Curriculum and instruction were planned to maximize all students' success, expanded cognitive and social function, and prepared students for the diverse 21st century. One such strategy that might have been necessary to move into the 21st century was a formal planned curriculum program for preventative mental health (Van Hoof & Hansen, 1999). This type of consistently planned program benefited all students who may have experienced struggles or trauma at the school.

Concerning inclusion, Walton et al. (2009) described planned instruction where all learners benefited and individuals with difficulties had interventions and curriculum modifications to maximize success. This instruction approach focused on best practice, which was a goal of all independent schools. The goal was not to determine the best inclusive practice, but rather diverse teaching strategies in the school's toolbox that ensured diverse learning (Walton et al., 2009). For equity purposes, one leader implored multicultural wisdom that had to be formally taught both academically and socially to prepare students (Ford, 2017). Schools may have accomplished this through a curriculum that adopted an anti-oppression lens, an anti-bias

lens, social justice lens, or a counternarrative lens (Ford, 2017; NAME, 2021). In addition to engaging students, these lenses also broadened the faculty's view and increased parent engagement (Ford, 2017).

The Cranbrook School had seen many benefits since the Horizons campaign adoption. One of Cranbrook School's most notable benefits since the Horizons program's inception was that the curriculum had become more inclusive, including African American history and new diverse literature courses (Snyder & Snyder, 1999). The purpose of the multiracial curriculum modifications was to enrich all students' experiences and learning, which typically has often excluded marginalized groups and been taught from a European centric framework (Mohan et al., 2013).

Similarly, Salas (2002) described updating the curriculum process at The Breck School as a process that enriched the curriculum and created a responsive curriculum that met all of their students' needs and prepared them for the future. The term culturally responsive curriculum was frequently used to address a diverse and more multicultural curriculum (Curtis, 1998). There were four curriculum levels associated with multicultural content: contributive, additive, transformative, and social action (Banks & Banks, 2019). The author explained that although contributive and additive levels were moving curriculum in the right direction, real change occurred in the children's learning process once the transformative and social action levels were attained (Curtis, 1998). The last two stages incorporated multicultural critical thinking through constructivist strategies to solve social issues.

Overall, any school or teacher concerned with educational equity for all students could have adopted a culturally relevant and responsive curriculum as an instrument to enhance the transformative social justice aim of multicultural education (Ford, 2017). Integrating engaging

material by challenging prejudice, bias, stereotypes, conflict resolution, difference, identity development, and communication techniques may have all bolstered equity in the classroom and improved the quality of a school's culture (Denevi & Richards, 2009). If educational equity was a school culture goal, then the school curriculum must have addressed racism, linguisticism, ableism, ageism, sexism, classism, religious intolerance, heterosexism, and xenophobia (NAME, 2021). Multicultural education curriculum and instruction could have helped develop a positive self-concept about the histories, cultures, and contributions of diverse groups (NAME, 2021). Multicultural education also prepared students for educational equity by increasing the knowledge, skills, and temperament to battle educational equity associated with diverse groups (NAME, 2021).

Community-based Partnership and Programs and Professional Developments

The Head of school at Groton described school-sponsored initiatives as opportunities to increase children of color's preparedness for independent schools (Maqubela, 2016). At The Breck School, the Headmaster stated committees had recommended many activities to support diversity (Salas, 2002). These sponsored initiatives and recommended activities were often community-based partnerships, programs, and PD's. That meant that they were not fully led by school personnel and utilized outside consultants, businesses, and institutions to enhance educational equity opportunities.

One such program was youth mentoring programs such as the Partners Achieving Student Success (PASS), an early intervention school-based program, that served financially disenfranchised communities (Rusch et al., 2019). PASS was developed collaboratively through a community partnership with outside agencies and providers. An example of a community-based partnership for an independent school was the 9th grade Outward Bound program (Ford,

2017). The program helped students learn and understand microaggressions, bias, and the cultural proficiency continuum (Lindsey et al., 2018). The cultural proficiency continuum, as mentioned previously, started with cultural destructiveness, and ended with cultural proficiency.

If independent schools sought to increase knowledge and awareness of their constituencies, they may have recommended and sponsored outside PD's. Some universal independent school PDs were the NAIS-sponsored Student Delegate Leadership Conference (SDLC), People of Color Conference (POCC), and the National SEED Project on inclusive curriculum (Ford, 2017). Independent schools sponsored these trips for constituencies for a multitude of reasons. However, if a school sought to adopt an educational equity goal, then independent schools may have wanted to consider these PD's yearly for all constituencies.

As a result of increased awareness and support, new community-based programs were adopted as constituents take ownership of their community to promote diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. As a result of the Horizons campaign at Cranbrook, alumni have since created the African American Awareness Association. The alumni were also the organizers of diversity day, which many independent schools now celebrate (Snyder & Snyder, 1999). These were just some examples of community-based partnerships, programs, and PD's that independent schools have adopted in their educational equity mission to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence.

Summary of School-wide Equity Practices

The last section gave an in-depth literature analysis of educational equity school-wide practices independent schools used to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. The literature depicted six main themes that appeared religiously; Raising Awareness & Providing Support; Financially Raised & Funded Programs; Philosophy, Mission, and Physical Plant;

Constituency Diversity & Knowledge; Curriculum & Instruction; and Community Based Partnership & Programs & Professional Developments. This study considered these a priori themes when addressing school Heads and was open to new emerging themes.

School-wide Equity Practice Barriers

The next section explored the potential barriers independent school leaders have encountered as they addressed educational equity practices to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. The literature came from both public and independent schools. Public sector barriers were needed to supplement the relatively thin literature regarding independent schools and the barriers independent school Heads encountered while addressing educational equity practices.

Introduction to School-wide Equity Practice Barriers

Mitchell (2016) quoted Arthur Powell in his book, *Lessons from Privilege: The American Prep School Tradition*, by saying that independent schools were special communities that change the constituencies that join them. Mitchell (2016) stated the constituencies were the most significant resource, but socioeconomic resources should not have been underestimated. Mitchell (2016) concluded that expanding upon socioeconomic diversity could have produced a genuinely equitable school community, such as one that valued inclusion, diversity, and cultural competence and experienced institutional support of that mission (Ford, 2017). Achieving this goal was not attainable without commitment, hard work, and resources needed to break barriers associated with educational equity to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Lack of socioeconomic resources was one barrier that appeared to be scarce concerning educational equity. Time was another resource appearing in scarcity. Educators only had so much time to

ensure student equity opportunities, safety, and success to become champions (Alvarez, 2019; National School Boards Association, 2018).

Denevi and Richards (2009) described some of the persistent independent school barriers as low percentages of teachers of color, students of color, performance expectations of students of color, constituency frustration with anti-racial institutional commitment, sexism, and financial stress of growing tuition. Independent school barriers of marginalized groups may have persisted due to the lack of a moral imperative buy in from school administrators. The importance of one moral imperative, student diversity, was seen from one student's recollection of his experience (Snyder & Snyder, 1999). The student stated he was happy to have classmates and friends whose lives had been touched by poverty and violence because without them, he would not have fully understood the country's social problems. It was up to the Heads of school and school administrators of independent schools to embrace the moral imperative of an equitable school that values diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence.

Diversity was positive for both Caucasian and marginalized students, such as those of color (Snyder & Snyder, 1999). Students of color that attended diverse schools have been shown to adopt higher career expectations and sought more education in comparison to students of color in segregated schools (Braddock & McPartland, 1982; Dawkins, 1983). Rowley and McNeill (2017) showed the importance of both students of color and white students attending racially and ethnically diverse schools by stating that it leads to more participation in racially and ethnically diverse settings later in life. If schools were preparing their students for a diverse world, administrators must have known the latest research and PDs. PDs were consistently created and provided so that school administrators could break down barriers within their community and enhanced community member's cultural competence (Arias, 2009). The reality was that the

world was becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent necessitating cultural proficiency in students. Diverse institutions required schools that were fostering student growth to effectively respond to diverse groups in the school and community in a positive manner who were culturally different (Banks, 2014).

Despite the growing diverse, interconnected world, school administrators continued to struggle to identify and promote inclusive practices in schools and perpetuate old thinking ways (Bustamante et al., 2009). Bustamante et al. (2009) identified outdated practices and situations in which school administrators struggle:

particularly when underlying norms and assumptions that reinforce inequitable practices often are deeply embedded in a school's culture and reinforced by societal expectations and power differences. In some cases, school leaders are completely unaware of cultural influences in school settings or, because of their own biases, even consciously choose to maintain a status quo of inequitable practices. (pp. 794-795)

School administrators' unawareness perpetuated the lack of educational equity promotion by utilizing outdated, undiverse, inequitable practices. In *Cultural Proficiency* (Lindsey et al., 2018), the three barriers to cultural proficiency were outdated systems of oppression, entitlement, and the unawareness of the need to adapt. If school administrators wanted to promote educational equity to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence, they must have encouraged constituency reflection as well as an examination of school-wide practice. Constituencies' unawareness and outdated practices may have been preventing them from attaining educational equity.

Cultural competence and socioeconomic diversity were just two characteristics of an equitable school with corresponding barriers standing in the way of achieving educational equity. There were many other characteristics of an equitable school that must have had corresponding barriers addressed. Dymond et al. (2008) described the educational equity barriers a school faced

with students with disabilities. Rodríguez-Mena and Sánchez (2017) discussed educational equity barriers in family diversity involving homoparental families. Chapman and Ainscow (2019) identified barriers in disadvantaged communities affecting educational equity. Monyeki et al. (2013) described equity barriers to sport participation. If independent schools were truly equitable, they should have been actively reflecting upon their practices and taking action on the corresponding barriers identified in their school community. It has been argued that schools' organizational structure, which often was through tradition, must have been transformed to reflect equity and social justice (Cambron-McCabe, 2006). To accomplish this, educational leaders urged schools to examine practices, policies, and organizational structures to remove barriers associated with characteristics such as, but not limited to, ethnicity, gender, ability, and sexual orientation (Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Skrla et al., 2006).

The next section of the dissertation dissected the literature of each barrier independent school Heads may have experienced when addressing educational equity practices that were designed to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. The four major themes were Outdated Systems; Direct and Defiant Resistance to Change; Lack of Resources & Geographics; and the Unawareness of the Need to Adapt.

Outdated Systems

The first central theme in the literature surrounding barriers school leaders faced when addressing educational equity practices to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence within their schools was outdated systems. Outdated systems can be defined as a school practice or policy that had not been updated, or a practice, or policy, followed because of tradition. Tradition may have played an essential role in creating potential educational equity barriers to increasing diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence in independent schools.

One such tradition may have been hiring a homogenous faculty. Independent schools must have made it their agenda to hire more diverse faculty and admit more diverse families (Ford, 2017). Having one teacher of color and few diverse applicants was not sufficient to address educational equity. Furthermore, concerning independent school leadership, people of color maintained a small percentage of the population, and female Heads of school were drastically lower than males (Diversity in leadership, 2018).

Through tradition, schools have institutionalized sexism, racism, ethnocentrism, ableism, and homophobia in their practices and policies (CampbellJones et al., 2010). Arias (2009) postulated that the “isms” apparent in school systems would have been eradicated long ago from policies and practices if social justice was the moral imperative that leaders accepted. Independent schools may have wanted to consider these traditions and how they affect the school’s daily climate and future incoming families. In considering new incoming families, independent schools may have wanted to alter admission strategies (Ford, 2017). Balancing admissions objectives with educational equity efforts to support students and their learning had been corroborated (Stevenson, 2014).

Other forms of tradition may have affected educational equity in schools. A school district’s case study showed that most experienced and highly educated teachers, renovation projects, academic recruitment fairs, and tours were concentrated in one side of town (CampbellJones et al., 2010). The tradition perpetuated benefits for one side of the city and marginalized the opposite side of the city. One might have argued that data-driven research would have been the most ideal and effective way to solve this problem in identifying where financial resources are best spent. However, the data-driven research findings regarding education policymaking have remained limited (Chapman & Ainscow, 2019). Both districts and

schools have been reluctant to engage with positive data-driven research (Harris et al., 2013). This concept could have perpetuated old habits and traditions where political ideology, anecdote, and whim decision making dominated policymaking (Chapman & Ainscow, 2019).

Traditional political ideology, anecdote, and whim decision making on policy had no place in tackling educational equity and only created barriers for educators trying to break them down. In addition to political ideology decision-making, top-down accountability had the potential to raise potential barriers as well. National systems continued to emphasize top-down accountability, and school officials who fell victim to that structure perpetuated barriers to school-level innovation (Chapman & Ainscow, 2019). Instead, school officials should have created a long-term vision by empowering the faculty to have been innovative and creative, and maintained a clear strategy that involves all stakeholders. However, schools may have continued to prolong the barriers to equity in schools by lacking long-term vision, inadequate school improvement infrastructure, and unclear strategies (Chapman & Ainscow, 2019).

Other school traditions in the literature that have been shown to perpetuate educational equity barriers were overemphasis on grouping and tracking, family models, updating curriculum, lack of instructional modifications and student choices, and school space restriction. The overemphasis on grouping and tracking, specifically to the detriment of marginalized students, had continued to promote desegregation in schools and denied educational equity for millions of students (Dymond et al., 2008; Futrell, 2004). One method for overcoming equity barriers was that grouping strategy should not reflect an overemphasis of students with disabilities or disadvantages (Dymond et al., 2008). If schools wanted to become equitable, diverse, culturally responsive, and inclusive institutions, then they must have reflected that in their grouping strategies.

Typically grouping strategies revolved around cognitive function in independent schools for curricular planning purposes. However, any overemphasis of a particular group for curriculum teaching purposes did not accomplish equity goals. Schools needed to make sure that their curriculum reflected their students' needs, challenged them appropriately with instructional modifications and allowed for connections to the students (Dymond et al., 2008; Rodríguez-Mena & Sánchez, 2017). Schools also must have engaged and empowered their students with their curriculum to increase equity and break down barriers. Dymond et al. (2008) demonstrated the importance of student choices in breaking down educational equity barriers and offering differentiated learning modes like hands-on.

Rodríguez-Mena and Sánchez (2017) emphasized the importance of the diversity of family models coexisting in schools. Schools have changed from model family to family models (López Sánchez et al., 2008). The emphasis of family models was the recognition of diverse families within a school community. Whereas the model family was the traditional family model and maintenance of a patriarchal ideology, where the family consisted of a man, woman, and offspring, perpetuated uniform culture (Rodríguez-Mena & Sánchez, 2017). If independent schools were going to meet the needs of students and prepare them for a diverse world, they must have reflected that notion in the families they admitted. Accepting uniform families would have only begotten a uniform culture.

Another tradition that existed in schools was the regulation of the use of space for families. Families faced institutional restrictions on the designation of appropriate use for family and community member access (Jefferson, 2015). This traditional system in place constrained how families participate on school grounds. Jefferson (2015) described this untold practice within schools as a barrier to the equity that prohibited families and schools' interaction. Schools

may have wanted to revisit their policies regarding where they restrict access to families, which may have been hindering equitable and diverse interactions.

Mitchell (2016) provided examples of some barriers specific to socioeconomic diversity in independent schools that were due to traditional and outdated practices. First, he stated that independent schools often gave admission priority to legacy applications. Legacy families are families who have students already enrolled or were previously enrolled in the school. Mitchell (2016) stated that at a typical independent school, 80% of the families are full tuition. Therefore, the alumni with legacy applicants were also affluent, prolonging the lack of socioeconomic diversity. Mitchell (2016) also identified the process of “need-aware” as a potential barrier in independent schools. The method of “need-aware” in independent schools was when the institution considers the student’s financial aid in the admissions process. Families with a higher need were at a greater risk of not being admitted, and families with less need had a lower risk of not being admitted (Mitchell, 2016). The “gapping” practice in independent schools also perpetuated the lack of socioeconomic diversity. The “gapping” method offered a family \$5000 of aid when they requested \$8000 of assistance, creating a gap of \$3000 extra for the family to burden. Mitchell (2016) stated that this makes an unfair advantage for the wealthier families and more significant stress for the socioeconomically disadvantaged families, increasing the likelihood of not attending. These traditional independent school tactics have also aided in the drop of financial aid percentages to families making under \$51,000 a year. They have increased the financial aid percentages to families making more than \$120,000 a year (Mitchell, 2016). This trend favored wealthier families receiving more financial aid and more impoverished families receiving less, prolonging the socioeconomic diversity that was already abundant in many independent schools.

Direct and Defiant Resistance to Change

If independent schools wanted to change and fully embrace educational equity, administrators must have empowered the faculty, and the faculty must have accepted broad-based action to an equitable culture addressing diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Kotter (2012) suggested that major internal transformation is unlikely unless people assist. Stakeholders would not have helped if they felt powerless, hence the empowering relevance. Additionally, direct resistance, defiance and complete unwillingness at any level would have thwarted the promotion of change toward an equitable school community. The direct and defiant resistance and the complete unwillingness of school members to change was the second major theme in the literature regarding barriers to educational equity.

Perhaps one of the first school districts to have faced direct and defiant resistance to equity changes was the Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS; Rowley & McNeill, 2017). Early on in promoting education equality, desegregation was met with fierce resistance and opposition from parents and the community. Demonstrations included Klu Klux Klan events, protests, and physical attacks towards students of color. Although direct defiance, resistance, and prejudice was identified at JCPS, school desegregation's opposition gradually subsided year after year. However, with time and persistence, JCPS was now one of the most desegregated schools in the country that had continued to flourish and realize student success in combination with ethnic and racial diversity (Frankenberg et al., 2003).

The direct and defiant resistance of school administrators and educators today was still notable in the literature. CampbellJones et al. (2010) highlighted an administrator whose lack of embrace for cultural proficiency values became increasingly apparent. The principal, Mr. Johnstone, outright rejected a parent's desire by stating their school was a colorblind society and

he would have liked to keep it that way. CampbellJones et al. (2010) also depicted a teacher, Mr. Adams, that outright rejected arguments and explanations given to him during a parent teacher meeting regarding skin color, pigmentation, and reverse racism. The teacher ended the meeting and suggested the child needed to learn to adjust if they were to succeed later in life. Chapman and Ainscow (2019) also confirmed school officials' direct resistance by depicting school authorities who defiantly attempted to challenge other leaders' analysis of equity and the quality of support provided for the primary schools. This evidence suggested that both teachers and administrators alike continued to thwart the equity conversations and school-wide policies needed to address diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence within their schools.

Another instance of direct and defiant resistance to equity in schools was the prejudice that individuals commonly hold toward marginalized groups. Bochenek and Brown (2001) highlighted the continued prejudice against gays and lesbians and the lack of others in society standing up for and protecting marginalized individuals from harassment and violence. Rodríguez-Mena and Sánchez (2017) showed how the limitation of preconceived ideas and prejudices towards non-traditional family models affected the school atmosphere. Ultimately, that limited school students and families by way of negative comments in school and home life and perpetuated negative associations and prejudices toward homoparental families.

Direct resistance persists in independent schools today. Ford (2017) described independent schools as predominantly white and elitist that continue to grapple with conflict and difference. Ford (2017) also depicted school leaders describing school constituencies' unwillingness to engage and identify their resistance to joining the diversity work because of the difficult conversations. Equity work put them in uncomfortable positions in regard to difference and was viewed as conflict. If independent school constituencies were unwilling to change and

adapt toward an equitable culture and encouraged others to join the equity calling willingly, equity would not have been fully realized (Ford, 2017). Independent schools must have tackled these barriers and found unique ways of challenging and engaging their school constituencies within the diverse, inclusive, and cultural work and brought into the equity mission.

Lack of Resources and Geographics

Dymond et al. (2008) identified five barriers that emerged from the inclusion of service-learning programs for students with disabilities. One of the emerging themes was lack of resources, also appearing in Ford (2017). Participants from five different schools identified resources as a component needed to increase inclusion within their schools. Lack of resources was a barrier to educational equity and moving toward cultural proficiency and cultural competence (Bustamante et al., 2009; CampbellJones et al., 2010). Shrinking resources could have been linked to budget cuts, which could have played a major role in changing the landscape of a school's practices and curriculum. Chapman and Ainscow (2019) stated that when there are budget cuts at the top, the loss of funding for teachers faced diminished impact and empowerment. Ultimately, students suffered if teachers were facing diminished impact and empowerment.

If a school was to fully embrace the ideology of educational equity by addressing diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence, then schools should have been focusing on empowering the teachers, not diminishing their empowerment. The lack of resources impeded that philosophy and prevented educational equity from truly being attainable. The lack of resources also affected necessary support staff needed to help marginalized students, particularly students with disabilities (Dymond et al., 2008). Certain children needed extra support and without resources, those supports may have been limited. Futrell (2004) also declared the

importance of educational equity necessary for minority and poor students. Futrell (2004) stated poor and minority students could have met the same standards as other students if given the educational resources and experiences, i.e., rigorous curriculum, highly qualified teachers, and technology. Futrell (2004) postulated that the barrier to educational equity concerning resources comes down to access and making sure that there was an equitable culture. If schools did not have the resources to provide a rigorous curriculum, highly qualified teachers, instructional resources, and enhanced technology then it was arguable that educational equity could not have been fully achieved.

Another barrier to educational equity that emerged in Dymond et al. (2008) was the lack of time. Other researchers have also identified time as a barrier to educational equity and cultural competence (Bustamante et al., 2009; Ford, 2017). To adequately address inclusion and diversity, Dymond et al. (2008) postulated that there needs to be an adequate amount of time for teachers to plan and manage their diverse students' needs. The equitable nature of the curriculum and the amount of time needed to plan thoroughly must have been considered when working with diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Many independent schools have shown to lack an equity plan (Ford, 2017). If there was no equity plan, then leaders would not have identified enough time, energy, or resources to focus on improving cultural competence to have met their diverse learners needs below with the amount of accountability demanded from everything else (Bustamante et al., 2009). If teachers and administrators were given more time, it would have allowed them to create more equitable curriculum and teaching plans.

Another one of the barriers that emerged in Dymond et al. (2008) was the barrier to and lack of appropriate transportation resources. Schools in Dymond et al. (2008) had limited funding regarding buses for access to the school, limiting educational equity by failing to address

students' diversity and inclusion. In the independent Cranbrook School in Michigan, the school leaders adopted the Horizons-Upward Bound (HUB) program to provide resources for the diverse inner city and suburban students to attend their school (Snyder & Snyder, 1999). However, the distance, traffic, and geographics can have played an important role in access to that school. Schools in southern California may have experienced the same type of homogeneity in communities or traffic problems and felt the need to seek diversity outside of the nearby neighborhoods. Other geographical issues not considered in the admissions process, such as missing meals due to far traveling, may have been present (Ford, 2017). If independent schools in Southern California planned to achieve educational equity through diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence, school administrators may have needed to consider the large geographical area of obtaining students as a potential barrier (Chapman & Ainscow, 2019; Ford, 2017). Furthermore, the potential resources needed to help students access that school, as seen in the HUB program, also needed to be considered (Snyder & Snyder, 1999).

In addition to the potential of geographics as a barrier to educational equity, the rising costs of independent schools also posed problems (Ford, 2017). M. Mitchell (2016) focused on the socioeconomic diversity of independent schools and the high tuition growth rate. Consequently, more families across a broader socioeconomic range now sought the financial help and eligibility to receive tuition rewards. This trend has resulted in more rewards, percentage-based on income, going to higher socioeconomic families and fewer rewards going to lower socioeconomic families (M. Mitchell, 2016). This trend has ultimately forced low-income families to enroll at lower rates due to not accepting the admission and aid offer.

The high cost and available competition may have forced families to consider other options, like, free public schools, cheaper charter schools, or other independent schools (Ford,

2017). For example, the yearly cost of one school, The Cranbrook School, was nearly \$50,000 for a high school boarding student and \$36,000 if they choose to commute (Cranbrook Schools, 2020). The \$50,000 price tag was the same cost for the 2020-2021 tuition cost at Harvard University (Harvard University, 2020). These \$50,000 and \$36,000 price tags might have led some families to choosing other options and may have affected equity and diversity even further. Researchers have already shown the drastic increase in independent school tuition causing low-income families to be less likely to find the extra resources needed to meet the attending financial gap than high-income families (M. Mitchell, 2016). M. Mitchell (2016) summed up this increase in tuition in independent schools: “As tuition rises, so will the number of families unable to afford it, creating more financial-aid demand among higher-income families.” (p. 29).

Unawareness of the Need to Adapt

The last major barrier to educational equity to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence abundant in the literature was the awareness of the need to adapt (Lindsey et al., 2018). Several themes fall under the umbrella of the unawareness of the need to adapt: privilege and entitlement; lack of knowledge; expectations; attitudes; beliefs; and reluctance.

The first theme, unawareness of the need to adapt stemmed from a lack of education, exposure, or lack of understanding evidence from data driven practices. For example, there was clear evidence of the academic benefits for white students and the lack thereof for students of color (The Education Trust, 2006). The Education Trust (2006) stated that if given the right teaching, right class, and proper support, students of color showed the evidence to excel. However, the achievement gap continued to persist among marginalized groups of students (CampbellJones et al., 2010). The gaps existed because of the catering towards some and the lack for others. CampbellJones et al. (2010) gave an example that highlights this catering in a case

study. The case study included a teacher sending home the annual information for Early America Day's dress-up day. The parent responded and was concerned about how authentic the experience would be for the African American students and how it made them feel (CampbellJones et al., 2010). The teacher failed to address the parents' concerns adequately. The parent responded to the teacher, stating that they hoped they understood how dressing up for the event was awkward for both African American students and potentially other non-white students (CampbellJones et al., 2010).

The teacher demonstrated their privilege and entitlement and failed to understand how the parent felt and perpetuated the feelings of marginalization for the students and families of color. The teacher was unaware of their need to adapt and was unable to meet every family's needs to achieve equity. There were other statements made by teachers in CampbellJones et al. (2010) that demonstrated their unawareness of needing to adapt, like questioning why cultural proficiency was necessary, or alluding to their 23 years of experience as a means of justification for perceived incompetence. The statements mentioned above characterized a school official lacking the information, knowledge, and understanding of how their lack of knowledge affected others. Another example of lack of knowledge given in CampbellJones et al. (2010) was where two faculty members discussed why another teacher, a teacher of the year recipient, did not bring in his family's pictures to share. It turns out that the teacher was gay and did not think that the school would have embraced his family and chose to remain hidden. In this scenario, the community lacked the knowledge of the teacher's true self. The teacher did not believe the community would support him, stemming from a lack of transparency. An uncomfortable climate where school constituencies must keep things to themselves made it difficult to support one another (Chapman & Ainscow, 2019). If the school culture did not promote educational

equity through diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence, hidden information and limited transparency will likely persist.

Another form of unawareness of the need to adapt was the attitudes of the school community's individuals. In one scenario in CampbellJones et al. (2010), the physical education teacher called a student a slowpoke and put him down in class. The lack of sympathy and empathy portrayed in the teacher's attitude in the conversation with the parent and principal was explicit (CampbellJones et al., 2010). The attitude of just one member in the school community could ruin a marginalized student's experience and equity. It was clear from the teacher's attitude that very low expectations of the student were held. Low expectations that permeated within schools are evident in students' attitudes about academic achievement (Futrell, 2004). One such attitude, of African American students, especially males, succeeding well was acting white, prolonged low academic achievement (Futrell, 2004). Those beliefs held collectively by the community and the individuals within them could have unintended consequences that did not promote educational equity through diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Religion was another commonly held belief that had significant implications in the classroom. Rodríguez-Mena and Sánchez (2017) state:

The ideology and religious beliefs of teachers could be a barrier to the implementation of actions aimed at family diversity, which is to say that it is acknowledged that there are educational professionals with a homophobic attitude who are against same-sex marriage. Educational laws have no effect when people are not aware of their actions. (p. 851)

School officials must have become aware of their beliefs and how their attitudes impacted educational equity. School officials could have potentially overcome ideology barriers by becoming culturally competent and working toward cultural proficiency. Ford (2017) spoke about the personal and institutional beliefs and attitudes and how they may have acted as barriers

to equity in independent schools. If individuals maintained cultural deficit thinking, fixed mindsets and did not adopt data-driven practices, such as keeping data and records, can have been detrimental to equity efforts (Ford, 2017). Furthermore, independent schools that maintained extremely high expectations of students and a diversifier mindset may have also been harmful to equity efforts. Ford (2017) described the diversifier mentality as white schools attempting to gain academic, economic, and social mobility by integrating solely high achieving, low-income students of color.

Student and family consciousness was another collectively held attitude or belief that may have posed barriers (Ford, 2017). One such belief was the uneasiness and uncertainty held by black students when facing interracial situations (Braddock, 1980). The perpetuation theory hypothesized that marginalized students' uneasy beliefs about interracial situations could have been altered by experiencing racially and ethnically diverse settings earlier in life (Rowley & McNeill, 2017). Unfortunately, certain groups such as students with disabilities lack exposure to other students have had unintended consequences. Dymond et al. (2008), showed that students with disabilities did not want to be placed in a situation where they could have faced potential embarrassment. As the gay teacher felt uneasy and avoided sharing his family, similarly, black students and students with disabilities avoided interracial situations and abled situations due to uneasiness. More inclusive experiences for all unique individuals would have begotten more understanding and open individuals.

The social inclusion of the marginalized students' consciousness may have been affected because they are overwhelmed, self-sacrificing, or experiencing contractual disconnectedness (Ford, 2017). Self-sacrificing means they were leaving their authentic selves at the front door, and contractual disconnectedness means they did not share a real sense of belonging (Ford,

2017). The students felt unconscious bias, classism, racism, isolation, disconnectedness, and frustration with the absence of equitable conversations (Ford, 2017). Additionally, the parents experienced the same feelings as the students. Ford (2017) touched upon this parent consciousness in independent schools and their level of engagement as a potential barrier to equity. Marginalized parents' equity messages reflecting pride and knowledge, positively affected students' self-esteem (Constantine & Blackmon, 2002). This suggested that community perception mattered in playing a role in achieving equity through community members' consciousness. Perhaps, as the perpetuation theory posits, if all school constituencies experienced more acceptance and educational equity earlier in life through diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence, all school constituents may have likely engaged rather than felt uneasy. Therefore, independent schools should have waited any longer and been okay with equity complacency but began to create an equitable culture (Romney et al., 2008). Widely held attitudes and beliefs were shown to have a potential major impact on school equity. Whether that was faculty, administration, student or parent attitudes or beliefs, the literature suggested that schools should have been aware and responsive to creating a culture of equity by examining all constituencies and institutional attitudes and beliefs.

The last theme that fell under the umbrella of the unawareness of the need to adapt was reluctance. Chapman and Ainscow (2019) used data-driven research to advance equity within education systems but still showed that while some teachers have embraced the extra responsibility, others were reluctant. Other researchers have also shown the lack of teacher involvement and reluctance as a barrier to family diversity, inclusion, and equity within schools (Ford, 2017; Rodríguez-Mena & Sánchez, 2017). One teacher in Rodríguez-Mena and Sánchez (2017) described the difficulty in getting teachers involved in diversity work because of personal

circumstances or ideology, such as their deep-rooted religious beliefs. If school officials and families were reluctant to talk openly about LGBTQIA+, or other marginalized groups because of their ideology or religious beliefs, then educational equity would not have been fully attained .

Oftentimes, schools' problem when addressing educational equity through diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence was lack of administrative support (Dymond et al., 2008; Ford, 2017). The Cranbrook School, which realized success in its educational equity adventure, had continued unwavering support from the administration despite changes in governance (Snyder & Snyder, 1999). Explicitly stating socioeconomic diversity was the primary goal of financial aid funding was one way to exhibit unwavering support from school leadership, however, leaders have been reluctant to (M. Mitchell, 2016). Ford (2017) also identified independent school leaders skeptical of a cultural competence focus. If the institutional goals were not modeled and exceedingly clear from the leadership team toward educational equity to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence, then it was less likely that those goals would have been fully realized (M. Mitchell, 2016). Any discrepancy in perceptions of the school's commitment to educational equity was correlated with less success (Romney et al., 2008).

Summary of School-wide Equity Practice Barriers

The last section gave an in-depth literature analysis of potential barriers Heads of independent schools may have encountered when utilizing educational equity school-wide practices to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. The literature depicted four main themes that appeared religiously; Outdated Systems; Direct/Defiant Resistance to Change; Lack of Resources & Geographics; and the Unawareness of the Need to Adapt. This study

considered these a priori themes when addressing school Heads and was open to new emerging themes. The next section explored the last research question regarding leadership behaviors.

Necessary Leadership Behaviors

The next section explored the leadership behaviors necessary to lead a school toward educational equity to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. The literature came from both the public and independent schools. Public sector leadership behaviors were needed to supplement the relatively thin literature regarding independent schools and leadership behaviors necessary to lead a school toward more educational equity.

Introduction to Necessary Leadership Behaviors

People became leaders because of their wealth, title, or name (Ciulla, 2004). Others developed or possessed specific characteristics, charisma, dispositions, or passions. Sometimes the circumstances in which people found themselves force individuals into leadership positions. Ciulla (2004) provided two elements on what constitutes leadership: leadership must have included willing followers and that leadership was not a person or position. Ciulla (2004) stated that leadership “is a moral relationship between people, based on trust, obligation, commitment, emotion, and a shared vision of the good” (p. 1).

Just because someone had the title school leader did not guarantee they were an effective leader. Educational researchers have highlighted the importance of effective school leadership and argued that it relies upon comprehension of school culture (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2001). The role of leadership has also been highlighted in social justice by providing access to all children regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, ability, socioeconomic status, age, or language (K. M. Brown, 2004). Culturally responsive leadership influenced student success and engagement within the school (Banks & Banks, 2019;

Skrla et al., 2006). Culturally responsive leadership was necessary more than ever considering the world only continued to become more diverse. The diverse nature of the 21st century required school leadership that prepared students for positive interactions with people who were different from them (Banks, 2014). However, in U.S. schools, there continued to be persistent and pervasive achievement gaps between different groups of students by perpetuating the status quo (Muhammad, 2009; Oakes et al., 2000). The perpetuation of the status quo continued to marginalize underprivileged black, brown, native, Asian students and families, and benefited other privileged groups (Larson & Ovando, 2001; Muhammad, 2009). These students who were “left behind” needed hope, vision, and equal access to the quality education that every child deserved to improve schools (K. M. Brown, 2006).

The hope, vision, equal access, and opportunity that marginalized students and families desired could have been realized through a change in school culture led by school leadership (Muhammad, 2009). One way a school could have altered its culture was by shifting its focus of learning. There had been a history of narrow school focus on standardized tests and prescribed curriculums (Sahlberg, 2011). Sahlberg (2011) argued that shifting a focus away from standardized tests to a student-centered learning style that was customized, creative, and encouraged risk-taking can increase students’ educational experiences and academic success. The cultural shift could have been directly affected by school leadership. Leithwood et al. (2007) indicated that school improvement was strongly influenced by school leadership and students’ quality of education. MacBeath and Dempster (2009) described a focus on student learning and creating favorable conditions to learning as two of the necessary factors for developing a learner-centered environment to increase student achievement. This suggested that school leadership maintained awareness and focus on all students (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009).

Another way school leadership could have addressed a change in culture toward more equity was based on a moral purpose. Davies (2007) referred to sustainability and constructing a leadership culture based on a moral purpose that provided success accessible to all. Garza et al. (2014) summed up the importance of sustainability in leadership: "...captures our earlier focus on sustained or improving school performance, with, as we will see, the importance of leadership establishing an improvement culture driven by social justice and democratic ideals" (p. 799). There was an abundance of research identifying achievement gaps among marginalized groups of students (Larson & Ovando, 2001; Muhammad, 2009; Oakes et al., 2000). However, research also showed school leaders tackling social justice's moral purpose in striving for equity and excellence, which have demonstrated success with students from various backgrounds (Capper & Young, 2007; Scheurich, 1998). Leading with a moral purpose was the adoption of a personal or institutional vision grounded in equity practices and focused on doing the right thing for all students. Furthermore, a moral purpose understood there were no statistically different academic achievement patterns among the students of various backgrounds; race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, language, culture, or neighborhood (Scheurich & Skrla, 2003).

This notion of a moral purpose and leaders adopting such purpose within the schools was indicative of a transformational leader. A transformational leader helped followers contribute more to the school effort through more creation, less stress, more flexibility, and openness to change (Bass & Riggio, 2006). If independent school leaders in the 21st century affected educational equity change through diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence, they must have bolstered the community members' openness to change. Furthermore, if school leaders led the moral purpose of educational equity transformationally then, their followers, in return, were

more likely to morph into transformational leaders themselves and lead the educational equity transformation in the future (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Emotional intelligence was another behavior that may be necessary for an effective leader. Emotional intelligence could have been defined as the ability to perceive emotions, access and generate emotions to assist thought, comprehend emotions and emotional knowledge, and reflectively regulate emotions that guided emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Daniel Goleman (1995) stated the five main elements within emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. The ability to understand and manage emotions within oneself and others was indicative of strong emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence studies have shown how emotionally intelligent administrative leadership was predictive of their leadership effectiveness in their follower's eyes (Kerr et al., 2006). Other studies have also shown emotional intelligence and its effectiveness on school counselor leadership and positive team performance (Jordan & Troth, 2004; Mullen et al., 2019).

Furthermore, emotional intelligence studies have shown; positive correlation to personal efficacy, personal leadership, leading to enhanced performance (D. Harper, 2016; J. D. Houghton et al., 2012; Joseph et al., 2015). Personal leadership and self-efficacy boiled down to the leader believing in themselves and growing personally and professionally within. The self-leadership and self-efficacy traits described in emotional intelligence were inherent to the "inside-out" process of personal and organizational change concerning cultural proficiency (Cross et al., 1989). Lindsey et al. (2018) confirmed the "inside-out" process as necessary for school leaders to promote culturally proficient leadership effectively. In sum, an effective school leader developed and used their emotional intelligence "inside" in return to be able to affect organizational change

“outside.” The school leader could have accomplished organizational change, such as a movement toward educational equity, by utilizing Goleman’s (1995) five emotional intelligence components.

Effective leaders empower, develop, and support. In *Leadership For School Success: Lessons From Effective Principals* (Garza et al., 2014), principals repeatedly touch upon empowering other school leaders, developing all school members and curriculum, and supporting all community members. School leaders need to empower, develop and support faculty, students, and family members to achieve educational equity by increasing diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Educational equity is a lofty goal, and change is often necessary to achieve such a lofty school improvement goal. Harris (2004) contends school leaders who empower faculty with leadership responsibilities enhance capacity for change and are more likely to achieve school improvement. Arias (2009) also showed us the importance of empowering marginalized groups like gay and lesbian individuals to lead their school community toward cultural proficiency.

In addition to being emotionally intelligent, effective leaders must have known how to empower, develop and support school constituencies properly, necessary for sustaining school improvement. However, without clear institutional goals, vision, and philosophies, there were no direction, harmonious with Gandhi’s phrase, “like a ship without direction or destination, labor without an ideal is fruitless” (p 101.) (Beohar, 2018). In the barriers section, M. Mitchell (2016) asserts educational equity will not be realized in independent schools without exceedingly clear institutional goals. Furthermore, Davies (2009) mentioned the imperative at the organizational level of a core mission and how that drove all initiatives and behaviors. Unfortunately, a significant amount of the pressure rested squarely on the school leadership to drive institutional

goals, vision, and philosophy. Saitis and Saiti (2018) asserted that school leadership was the critical factor in successfully attaining a school's organizational goals and vision (Blackmore, 2002). Daniels (2011) described how independent school leadership could have impacted school philosophies to contribute increased equity: "...a clear focus on quality and achievement, the flexibility to respond to the educational needs of individual students, strong systems of accountability to parents and government and the capacity to recruit high-quality staff..." (p. 336-337). Flexibility of responses, systems of accountability, and recruiting high quality staff, and clear direction on behalf of leadership were just some of the ways depicted empowering, developing, and supporting school constituencies.

Increased equity was applaudable, but establishing an equitable culture was the vision. However, establishing an equitable culture was much more complicated. It required many factors such as personal optimism and belief in students and the school, faculty, and staff's standard of excellence (Linton, 2013). Linton (2013) stated that educational equity could have only been achieved in a school culture where the school's efforts were focused on achieving equity for all where students were individually supported within their unique differences. If Linton (2013) was correct, then the school leadership was in the driver seat of setting the tone for exceedingly clear institutional goals, vision, and philosophies to address educational equity to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence within their institution.

Researchers like Zacarro et al. (2004) have extensively examined the literature on successful leadership behaviors such as social intelligence, emotional intelligence, cognitive capacities, general intelligence, problem-solving skills, emotional stability, solution generation, and motivation lead, and many more. However, there was significantly less literature specifically identifying leadership behaviors needed to address educational equity within schools, moreover

independent schools. One such statement regarding independent school leaders wanting to implement equity initiatives implored that they must be resilient, clear communicators that collaborated, and could facilitate the equity message to all constituencies (Devenvi & Richards, 2009; Kaufman, 2003).

The next section examined more thoroughly the five potential independent school leadership behavior themes displayed by school leaders to address educational equity to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence; Focus on Learning & Making a Difference; Transformational Leadership Behaviors; Strong Emotional Intelligence; Empower, Support, Develop; and Clear Goals, Vision, Expectations, Philosophy, Values and Beliefs.

Focus on Learning and Making a Difference

This section of the dissertation started the same way schools and educators should have started, focusing on the child and their learning (Muhammed, 2009). Linton (2011) also specifically stated that leaders should have focused on what matters the most: students' learning regarding equity. The literature contained several principals and school leaders describing a focus on learning, most often the children's education and the importance of making a difference. One principal stated that he worked for the children (Zollers et al., 1999). He further stated that although inclusion was an enormous responsibility, it was his responsibility to get the village involved in educating the children. Another principal described the importance of developing non-cognitive domains, social and affective, and their role in maturing students' character development needed for the diverse 21st century (Wang et al., 2016). Wang et al. (2016) interviewed four different principals, and all maintained the same unwavering focus: the children. Garza et al. (2014) provided evidence of varying leadership techniques when managing the instructional program. Some principals were direct when working with staff, and others

displayed an indirect leadership style to improve classroom instruction. However, all principals were instructional leaders who focused on making a difference with the students and improving the teacher's performance. Day et al. (2007) verified the importance of school leadership in promoting the students' learning and the staff. The educational leader needed to ensure the number one objective for success, students', and teachers' best interests (Davies, 2009).

Davies (2009) described the six levels of learning leadership as involved in the pupil, teacher, staff, organization, learning networks, and leadership learning. These levels promoted students, faculty, and leadership's continued learning and development. Researchers have advocated for this style of leadership, centered on learning (Southworth, 2008). It could have helped to contribute to school improvement and allowed schools to respond more readily to change, such as a new focus on educational equity (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009; Stoll & Louis, 2007). A learner-centered leadership focus also contributed to better student outcomes, which all principals should have been morally driven and committed to (Roberts & Pruitt, 2003). Inclusive schools have described a morally driven and committed program as one of the main behaviors needed from school leadership (Hunt & Goetz, 1997). The notion of morally driven led to the next leadership behavior needed by school leadership: transformational behaviors.

Transformational Leadership Behaviors

Scholars have implored the imperative of educators who work for educational equity and social change over educators just carrying out every day technical duties (Cochran-Smith, 1998; Fink & Resnick, 2001). Unfortunately, as recently as 2001, data showed 90% of educational leaders continued to lean towards technical components over the moral aspects (Rapp et al., 2001). Some leaders have demonstrated success by maintaining a social justice moral purpose striving for equity and excellence with students from various backgrounds (Capper & Young,

2007; Scheurich, 1998). However, most of the research showed significant achievement gaps and lack of equity in great part due to school leadership (Larson & Ovando, 2001; Muhammad, 2009; Oakes et al., 2000).

Leaders today are still advocating for equitable leadership in combination with equitable school culture and propelling inclusion forward (Linton, 2013; Maqubela, 2016). Leaders that only focused on the technical aspects failed to address equity concerns of diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Given that disturbing reality, courageous, transformational leadership in education was required (K.M. Brown, 2006). All transformational leadership approaches accentuated values and emotions, shared a common focus of building capacities, and promoted higher levels of commitment to organizational goals (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2009, as cited in Davies, 2009). Students, faculty, and community members' increased capacity and commitment result in more significant effort and productivity toward those organizational goals (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2009, as cited in Davies, 2009). A transformational leadership approach could have greatly influenced organizational goals, such as realizing educational equity through increased diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence.

Authenticity was one term often associated with transformational leadership (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Authenticity was vital to transformational leadership because schools around the U.S have begun to realize that authentic leadership was imperative to our morphing society (Cramp, 2010). Arias (2009) pointed out that cultural proficiency required an authentic leader who transformed culture by improving relationships and led with moral purpose and integrity. Leading a school toward the goal of cultural proficiency created more educational equity. To lead an organizational goal of more educational equity, school leaders should have extended their leadership toolbox by building upon the four behaviors of transformational leadership, idealized

influence, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation (Wahab et al., 2014). Some school leaders have already tapped into the four transformational characteristics to realize educational equity at their schools.

Idealized Influence. In a study involving 12 outstanding principals, Williams (2008) studied the school principals' emotional and social competencies. Findings showed significance in leader influence as one of the main components in outstanding principals' social and emotional competencies. Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) described school leadership idealized influence as building consensus and commitment toward organizational goals and developing school-wide practices and policies to bolster participation in school decisions. Leadership idealized influence was shown to promote educational equity. For example, rather than pointing fingers, Sanger School District leadership influenced their institutional culture by developing communication, trust, and focused on their organizational goal, equity (Linton, 2011). School principals have also been shown to influence school department chairs' desired outcomes and play a role in developing transformational formal teacher leaders (Baal, 2011). That finding was consistent with Burns' (1978) assertion that transformative leaders elevated their subordinates' consciousness on the importance of the organizational outcomes desired.

Individualized Consideration. Showing humility and paying attention to constituencies' needs were important aspects of being a transformational leader (Burke, 2014). One teacher who experienced such a leader in Baal (2011) described how after admitting to struggling, the principal immediately provided individualized conversations and resources to ensure she was more comfortable with the expectations. Understanding all community members' needs and appropriately responding to those needs indicated individualized consideration (Gardner & Stough, 2002). Leban and Zulauf (2004) described individualized consideration as diagnosing

and evaluating needs, giving feedback and support, removing roadblocks to allow for maximum potential, and empowering others. Leadership individualized consideration was shown to promote educational equity in transforming school culture. Creating systems of support, breaking down teachers' walls of isolation, and providing professional development were tools school leaders could have used to transform a school culture toward equity (Muhammad, 2009).

One study depicted principals utilizing individual consideration to affect school culture (Nunnally et al., 2003). Principals could have encouraged a low-stress environment, provided creative professional development opportunities, supported teachers in new instructional strategies, empowered teachers and students in student learning and achievement, and been the lead change agent in school culture. These behaviors considered the school's individuals and indicated a principal seeking to create more educational equity through diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. For diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence, leadership must have supported an environment where all community members were working collaboratively to increase learning capacity (Flamini, 2010). If school leadership expected to serve the diverse 21st century of students best and increase student achievement, school leadership must have provided individualized consideration (Flamini, 2010).

Intellectual Stimulation. Leaders who challenged the status quo and appealed to their followers' intellect by encouraging them to be creative and innovative with new strategies displayed intellectual stimulation (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Bass et al., 2003). A school leader that demonstrated intellectual stimulation encouraged critical thinking and problem solving geared toward institutional goals and abandoned outdated strategies that hinder them (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Bass et al., 2003). For these reasons, school leaders should have adopted intellectual stimulation in realizing an institutional goal like educational equity through increased diversity,

inclusion, and cultural competence. Leithwood and Sun (2012) showed that school leadership must have role modeled organizational values and behaviors and developed subordinates through intellectual stimulation to achieve organizational goals, such as equity. In one study, Howden (2018), a school leader, stated: “It will take visionary and creative leadership to ensure that we chart the stormy seas...as to guarantee an equitable future for all...” (p. 40-41).

Researchers have identified the importance of transformational school leadership and intellectual transformation (Branch, 2019; Howden, 2018). It was crucial school leadership was not afraid to challenge the status quo and was always willing to do what was best for the organizational goals regardless of the follower backlash (Howden, 2018). It was equally important for school leaders to model expectations, provide feedback, and give teachers autonomy (Branch, 2019). That style of intellectual stimulation provided for more creativity and innovation by increasing teachers’ self-efficacy. Increasing teachers’ self-efficacy, seeking alternative perspectives and problem-solving, thought and imagination, and beliefs and values were components of a transformational leader that was intellectually stimulating (Bass, 1985). According to Bass (1985), if we were going to shift the school community’s thinking toward educational equity, then followers would have only responded to a leader who utilized intellectual stimulation. Arias (2009) stated school leaders have struggled to enable school constituents culturally through intellectual stimulation. Therefore, 21st-century school leaders must have considered intellectual stimulation when addressing educational equity through diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence.

Inspirational Motivation. The word motivate was found directly in Burns’s (1978) definition of a transformational leader when he stated leadership raises followers to higher motivation and morality levels. Inspirational motivation was operationally defined as

communicating a vision and portraying optimism and confidence that such vision will be achieved (Bass & Avolio, 1995, as cited in Antonakis et al., 2004). Several studies have even shown inspirational motivation emerging past the previous transformational characteristics, including Avolio and Bass's (2004) own MLQ reliability scores for each transformational characteristic (Mills & Boardley, 2016). Therefore, inspirational motivation was arguably the most critical factor for school leaders to consider when leading transformationally. One such school leader that displayed exceptional, inspirational motivation was Mr. Knight (Zollers et al., 1999). Mr. Knight not only was blind, and role modeled overcoming disabilities, but also maintained the belief that all children could succeed, and his persistence elevated the entire community's views of inclusive education. Another study, Ryczek (2018), showed a significant correlation between the principal's leadership and teacher's motivation to integrate technology. Technology allowed teachers to address educational equity issues in different conceptual and linguistic ways that created meaningful and authentic learning experiences (Warschauer et al., 2004).

A transformational leader possessed the behaviors to motivate their followers toward organizational goals (Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Leithwood et al. (2007) described some of those behaviors as persistent even in the face of doubts, inspiring staff motivation, maintaining high expectations, and maintaining a commitment to learning and achieving for all. Those behaviors were consistent with other educational leaders' calls to educational equity (Singleton, 2015; Linton, 2011, 2013). Singleton (2015) implored that educational leaders required courageous conversations to tackle educational equity in school systems, and motivated the school constituencies to a higher purpose. K. M. Brown (2006) corroborated those courageous conversations were inherent to a transformational leader. Because of the pervasive literature

regarding inspirational motivation and its effects on followers in the school system, leadership's inspirational motivation could have promoted educational equity.

Strong Emotional Intelligence

In this study, emotional intelligence immediately followed transformational leadership because of studies like Gardner and Stough (2002) that linked them together. Palmer et al. (2001) showed that a person's ability to control one's own emotions and monitor others' emotions was an underlying competency of transformational leadership. Being able to control one's emotions and monitor others was inherent to a strong emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence was an important quality in independent schools because it helped build relationships founded upon trust and allowed constituencies to be vulnerable (Ford, 2017). Other literature had shown school leaders tapping into the five characteristics of Goleman's (1995) emotional intelligence to address educational equity; self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social skills, and empathy.

Self-awareness. Wang et al. (2016) asserted that successful school leaders guided their practices with their beliefs, values, and personal qualities. To lead an organizational goal such as educational equity effectively, leaders must have been self-aware of their thoughts, beliefs, values, emotions, and personal qualities. Awareness and openness to diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence in education were prerequisites for social justice and equity (K. M. Brown, 2006).

Self-regulation. Not only did a school leader need to be self-aware, but they also must have been able to self-regulate by quickly monitoring and controlling their emotions, leading to resilience. Merchant et al. (2012) stated for today's sociopolitical context, school leaders must have been resilient in meeting today's educational demands. School leaders' resilience helped

create and sustain learning environments that contribute to the students' learning (Garza et al., 2014; Merchant et al., 2012).

Motivation. In addition to resilience, there must also be a motivation exhibited by the school leader to sustain efforts. Garza et al. (2014) describe a principal, Ms. Martinez, who continued to display a passionate commitment to providing all students with the opportunity for success in times of stress. Creating opportunities for success for all students is the cornerstone of educational equity. Influential school leaders must be internally motivated not by money but driven by a social justice philosophy (Garza et al., 2014).

Social Skills. Once a philosophy of social justice is adopted that motivates the leader's actions and behaviors, strong school leadership still requires leaders that can speak confidently, clearly, and effectively challenge popular misconceptions (Merchant et al., 2012). These are characteristics of an individual with strong social skills that can communicate effectively. Framing and communicating organizational goals, like educational equity, is significant for inclusion concerning principal leadership (Alinsunurin, 2020). The proficiency in which a school leader frames and communicates is part of social skills to build relationships, networks, rapport, and compromises. A parent describes a principal's social skills who listens and respects all school constituencies to bring the community together (Zollers et al., 1999).

Empathy. Being empathetic and caring for others were qualities found in the International Successful School Principal Project (Gurr & Day, 2014). Wang et al. (2016) also found that the effective principals studied were empathetic of other thoughts and feelings and responded appropriately. Educational equity involved diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence of different perspectives, and leaders must have been able to listen and empathize. One brilliant example of building empathy and perspective sharing was the black school leader,

Darrell, who shared his testimony on fitting the profile (K. M. Brown, 2006). Other principals were open and were able to build upon their empathy toolbox by listening to Darrell. Building empathy, social skills, motivation, self-regulation, and self-awareness were instrumental in developing emotional intelligence.

Another characteristic closely linked to building a strong emotional intelligence was leader-self efficacy (Easton et al., 2008). Self-efficacy was a strong belief in oneself concerning completing the outcome, such as educational equity (Bandura, 1986). Educational equity had many barriers, as referenced above. However, overcoming those barriers and rallying followers towards that vision must have been exerted by the leader to display leadership self-efficacy (Paglis & Green, 2002). Followers perceive leaders who demonstrated self-efficacy and emotional intelligence as more effective and transformational (Sivanathan & Fekken, 2002). Based on Ashkansays and Tse's (2000) findings of transformational leadership evoking more positive thinking among followers about new visions, it could have been assumed that emotional intelligence was an effective behavior of a leader when developing a new vision like educational equity.

Empower, Support, and Develop

School leadership cannot tackle the organizational goal of educational equity by increasing diversity inclusion and cultural competency without teachers' followership. Leadership also supported and supervised teachers' teaching practices and student supervision in successful schools (DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). Furthermore, school leadership must have developed teachers (Hallinger, 2003). This notion of leadership support, development, and empowerment, for most importantly teachers and other school community members, appeared time and time again within the literature. Empowering teachers and other staff with leadership

responsibilities was correlated with a higher capacity for change, such as an equity culture change (Harris, 2004). Empowering students, whether through student voice or with local community engagement, enhanced learner inclusion, student learning, and most importantly, overall school improvement (Cruddas, 2007; Frost, 2008; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009). In an inclusive community such as the Connolly School community, the community felt empowered through the principals' democratic and collaborative decision-making approach (Zollers et al., 1999). Teachers were given extra responsibilities, and empowered parent's voices were supported, leading to more student achievement. Ford (2017) demonstrated constituency empowerment as well, where all constituencies were empowered with the responsibility to embrace the equity culture.

Developing teachers through professional development and supporting teachers who sought their development was also a common behavior among effective school leaders (Garza et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2016). For followers to understand diversity, inclusiveness, and cultural competence, it was assumed that learning and development must be associated. K. M. Brown (2006) stated that developing all community members with learning opportunities from another socioeconomic, ethnic, religious, or sexual-orientation background was useful for school leadership to promote educational equity by promoting cultural competence. It was important to stress the notion that effective school leaders empower, develop and support all in the school community and focused on creating a community-centered organization (Garza et al., 2014; Merchant et al., 2012). A goal such as educational equity was terrific, but without empowering, supporting, and developing school constituencies, school leaders were unlikely to lead to sustainable change (Chapman & Ainscow, 2019).

One aspect of being a transformational leader, being a role model, enhanced follower participation. If school leaders were going to empower, support, and develop teachers and community members in their learning, school leaders must have also empowered, supported, and developed their learning. One such way school leaders developed their own learning was by becoming more culturally aware and responsive. Culturally responsive individuals offered accessible explanations and were innovative in a curriculum that motivates marginalized groups (Scott et al., 2013). In Merchant et al. (2012), successful school leaders became educational experts by enhancing their learning and continuously participating in partnerships and organizations to support and advocate for their school's constant improvement and learning.

Danielson (2002) stated that school business is learning, and school leaders could have supported that purpose by empowering, supporting, and developing others. No school leader could have accomplished an organizational goal such as student learning and educational equity alone. They needed teachers, staff, and community members to help carry out the programs (Wang et al., 2016). Therefore, school leaders must have empowered others, supported others, and developed others, including themselves, and the community when seeking to address educational equity by increasing diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence.

Clear goals, Vision, Expectations, Philosophy; Values and Beliefs

Most of the research on interactions between leaders and their followers showed that leaders who set clearly defined expectations created conditions for followers to be more successful than followers who worked with leaders who did not clearly define expectations (Podsakoff et al., 1984). Institutional goals, vision, expectations, and philosophies must have been clear to allow for more success for followers and the institution. One example was the effective principals in Garza et al. (2014) clearly articulating their views on education, which set

schools up for success in their goals and vision. A vision such as educational equity must have included school leaders clearly defining institutional goals, expectations, and philosophies. Rhodes and Brundrett (2009) stated that in becoming learning-centered schools, leaders placed the student and staff learning at the institution's core. Clearly stating that vision of student and staff learning and fostering acceptance of a school goal such as educational equity and maintaining high expectations was how effective school leadership built vision and set direction (Leithwood et al., 2007). Independent school leaders could have built vision by leading with data-driven practices (Ford, 2017). If schools were going to maintain a firm commitment to social justice, then leaders must have been informed on the latest data regarding teaching, learning, political and social factors that comprised the school's educational equity mission and values (Merchant et al., 2012).

Another clear philosophy was the belief that all children could learn, rooted in an inclusive school community (Sands et al., 2000). The principal, Mr. Knight also made this claim (Zollers et al, 1999). However, he took it even further by genuinely fostering a community that valued people with disabilities and protected their rights within the community. Believing all children can succeed indicated a leader adopting a growth mindset, rather than a deficit mindset (Ford, 2017). It was important to note that while clear institutional goals, vision, expectations, and philosophy were a great prescription, school leaders' internal mindset, consisting of personal values and beliefs, drove institutional goals, visions, and expectations. Edwin Lou Javius summed this notion up by saying equity was not a strategy; it was a mindset that school leaders must have displayed (EDEquity, 2006, as cited in Linton, 2011).

Educators and individuals may have believed that inclusion, diversity, and cultural proficiency may hinder academic success. However, for school leaders to effectively address

educational equity, they must have maintained the mindset that there was no contradiction between advocating for social justice and striving for academic success (Merchant et al., 2012). Merchant et al. (2012) asserted that successful inclusive schools contained school leaders that maintained a focus on academic achievement and addressed social and civic issues, like equality. In addition to believing in culturally responsive teaching, educators must also have been sensitive to the diverse student population's cultural lens to create an equitable learning environment and clearly define their behavior expectations (Davis, 2012). If equitable teaching practices required clearly defined expectations, then equitable school practices must have certainly required clear goals, expectations, and philosophies for the educational equity task at hand from the school leader.

Hunt and Goetz (1997) shared another way school leaders could have effectively addressed equity by having a consensus on a set of values and beliefs. This consensus set of values should have included a norm for excellence and success for each student, characterized by a school culture of equity (Linton, 2013). This norm was the epitome of Mr. Knight's school and Mr. Knight himself (Zollers et al., 1999). His school successfully created an entire community of inclusion because of the clear institutional goals, expectations, and philosophy. Furthermore, he led with his clear personal values and beliefs, which Sergiovanni (1994) argued was how successful principals should lead. First, principals should have led with clear personal values and beliefs, such as maintaining high expectations (Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Wang et al., 2016). Then principals should have emphasized support for teaching, a caring atmosphere, nurturing relationships, embracing non-traditional forms of leadership, and identified leaders who were constantly searching for educational equity (C. Marshall, 1995). Independent school leaders addressing equity have been shown to lead with their values and beliefs, such as: advocating for

students, self-advocating, and constant self-learning (Ford, 2017). Therefore, if school leaders genuinely wanted to address educational equity to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence, school leaders should have been setting clear institutional goals, vision, expectations, and philosophies led by their internal values and beliefs.

Summary of Necessary Leadership Behaviors

The last section gave an in-depth literature review of educational equity leadership behavior necessary to lead a school toward diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. The literature depicted five major themes of leadership behaviors necessary to lead a school toward more diversity, inclusion and cultural competence; a Focus on Learning & Making a Difference; Transformational Leadership Behaviors; Strong Emotional Intelligence; Empower, Support, Develop; and Clear Goals, Vision, Expectations, Philosophy, Values and Beliefs. This study considered these apriori themes when addressing school Heads and was open to new emerging themes.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methods

The purpose of this phenomenographic study was to explore how independent Heads of school in Southern California described the school-wide equity practices they were utilizing, barriers they have encountered, and the leadership behaviors that were necessary for achieving diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school.

Research Questions

Three research questions that guided this phenomenographic study were:

1. How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the school-wide equity practices they utilized to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school?
2. How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the barriers they encountered as they addressed school-wide equity practices to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence practices at their school?
3. How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the leadership behaviors they utilized for school-wide equity practices to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence practices at their school?

Research Design and Rationale

This study adopted a qualitative approach to inquiry. The purpose of qualitative research is to adopt the lens of the participant's perspectives and convey that perspective to others in a detailed description of meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Because of this purpose, qualitative research is often characterized by studying participants in their natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Furthermore, qualitative inquiry seeks to understand participants' human experience through narratives that examine both experiences and behaviors (Moustakas, 1994).

This study included participants who provided narratives, through interviews, regarding their experience utilizing educational equity school-wide practices, the barriers encountered, and leadership behaviors that were necessary to lead a school toward more diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. This type of qualitative study was synonymous with phenomenographic, a subset of phenomenology.

According to Creswell (2013), a phenomenological study could have been used to explain a shared experience amongst individuals for the same phenomena. Vagle (2018) described phenomenological research as not getting inside participants' minds but rather a way for researchers to contemplate the way things appeared and manifested in our world. It was essential to note that phenomenological research sought to contemplate the world as it was lived, not measured (Vagle, 2018). Because of this aspect inherent to phenomenological analysis, Husserl (1977) said there are pure possibilities. The pure possibilities combined with systematic concreteness rooted in phenomenology produced both empirical science and the science of actualities (Husserl, 1977). The science of actualities described in transcendental phenomenology sought to understand actual human experience (Moustakas, 1994). This study sought to understand the Heads of School specific human experience regarding the educational equity phenomena in independent schools as it manifested and appeared in the world. Because of the limited research regarding the Head's perspectives and experiences of their educational equity school wide-practices, barriers encountered and leadership behaviors necessary to lead a school toward more diversity, inclusion and cultural competence, abundant understanding was required. As it focuses on specific experiences rather than the lived experience in general, a phenomenographic design was a better label as the study focused on conceptions of the phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Marton, 1981).

Guba and Lincoln (1994) stated that a constructivist approach was used when the purpose of the inquiry was to understand and interpret. This study sought to understand and interpret the independent educational equity reality that educational leaders continue to long for. Broido and Manning (2002) said the constructivist approach aspired to unearth and narrate each participant's nature. Although participants' responses were placed at the center of inquiry and guided the data analysis, there was potential for multiple interpretations of the same phenomena (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, the researcher considered multiple interpretations of the same phenomena in the data analysis stage. The constructivist approach reflected how the primary researcher personally makes meaning during the analysis stage (Crotty, 1998). After the participants shared their lived experiences, the researcher focused on constructing the phenomena based on the manifestation of their responses (Litchman, 2006).

The suppression of suppositions is one of the most important aspects of phenomenology. Phenomenological researchers must set aside any prejudgments or assumptions regarding the observed phenomena to allow for a non-judgmental lens. This process was known as bracketing (Creswell & Poth, 2016). An alternative name to bracketing, the epoche process, attempts to mitigate any biases, preconceptions, beliefs, or knowledge of the phenomena before the study (Moustakas, 1994). Bracketing or epoche was necessary for transcendental phenomenological research. Moustakas (1994) suggested that researchers are naive when listening, completely open, withholding opinions or judgments, and were attentive to participants describing their experiences. Bracketing or epoche was adopted to mitigate the natural human bias and judgment viewpoint during the data collection and data analysis phases.

The researcher used semi-structured interviews as the main instrument in this study to elicit meaningful and valid data. Bernard et al. (2016) stated the semi-structured interview was

valid and reliable with a long history of qualitative educational inquiry able to produce extensive data. Furthermore, educational phenomena were best understood through the school personnel's experiences requiring qualitative interviews (Seidman, 2019). Qualitative interviews that sought experienced and knowledgeable participants' perceptions could have provided thick and rich descriptions (Given, 2008). The thick and rich descriptions provided from the Head of independent schools' responses investigated in this study could not be properly derived or described from numerical data. Therefore, participants' responses drove the analysis to understand educational equity in independent schools to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence within their respective schools.

Setting

The setting of this study was limited to independent schools in Southern California. Independent schools are abundant in Southern California but are most dense in Los Angeles County. The Los Angeles Independent Schools Association (LAIS) contains 59 schools within their association (LAIS, 2020). The independent school association for the entire state of California, CAIS, stated there were a total of 125 independent schools in southern California from Los Olivos and Santa Barbara to Idyllwild and San Diego (CAIS, 2020). The independent schools in Southern California were composed of all boys' schools, all girls' schools, and many co-ed schools. There were dual language immersion schools, boarding schools, and religious affiliation schools. The current students in these schools were enrolled in the grades of pre-k through 12th grade. LAIS did not provide specific demographic information, but CAIS stated that they serve 39% of students of color and 24% of teachers of color. CAIS quick facts also stated that 15% of financial awards were for less than 25% of tuition, 28% for 25-49% of tuition, 29% for 50-75% of the tuition, and 29% for more than 75% of the tuition. The researcher began

by recruiting Heads in Los Angeles independent schools identified by independent school leaders as exemplary schools. The researcher did not have to extend the search outside of Los Angeles to greater Southern California due to satisfying the minimum number of participants necessary to complete the study.

Participants, Sample, and Sampling Procedures

This study sought exemplary schools in Southern California and interviewed their Head of school to understand how they described school-wide equity practices they are using, barriers they have encountered, and the leadership behaviors that were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Exemplary schools were defined as schools that were actively addressing school-wide equity practices, overcoming barriers, and leading with behaviors that were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence.

A purposive sampling technique was used to produce a small and non-random sample of participants. Serra et al. (2018) stated that the purposive strategy was naturally different from random strategies because of the sample cases chosen to maximize the chances of observing the phenomena of interest. Overall, purposeful sampling recruits participants who were most likely to contribute information directly related to the study (Patton, 2014). The schools that were likely to contribute the most amount of information to the study were exemplary schools that were already addressing school-wide equity practices, tackling associative barriers, and leading with behaviors that were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. The small number of experienced participants and lengthy interviews allowed for in-depth descriptions from the participants. Therefore, this purposeful criterion sampling technique focusing on exemplary independent schools was appropriate for this research.

The research's inclusion criteria required that all participants be the current Head of school or position equivalent to, in the 2020-2021 school year, in one of the independent schools within the setting. The inclusion criteria also included that the Head of school or position equivalent must have held their position for at least three years. A minimum of ten participants was set to provide validity through trustworthiness. This number was determined based upon Creswell's (2014) review of qualitative research. Specifically, for phenomenological inquiry, Creswell (2014) suggested a range from three to ten participants. For this study, 11 individuals participated in the interview process.

The researcher sent electronic recruitment letters of intent (Appendix A) to participants in the setting that were deemed exemplary schools by independent school leaders in Southern California. A total of 31 invitations were sent with an anticipated response rate of 30-40% due to unawareness of years in the position, current stress level, and the amount of extra work placed on independent Heads of school during the 2020-2021 school year. The anticipated response rate also reflected the general nature of voluntary participation. The researcher tried to increase the response rate by adopting a snowballing technique, which asked participants to recommend exemplary schools to participate that met the inclusion criteria (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The researcher concluded that considering exemplary schools may likely increase response rate because of their invested interest and passion regarding educational equity in independent schools.

Human Subjects Considerations

All methods associated with this study adhered to procedures and guidelines instructed through Pepperdine's Institutional Review Board (IRB, 2020). The researcher applied for an Exempt review; Category Two, because the study did not pose more than minimal risk to

participants and no participants were under the age of 18; nor did data collection include any sensitive data; nor were special or protected populations involved. Heads of school naturally have to answer equity questions daily and this study did not pose anything above minimal risk. As such, this study was approved by the IRB (see Appendix E) as meeting the criteria for Exempt research.

Confidentiality was held in its highest regard, and the researcher was adamant when addressing concerns. The measures taken for interviews, data collection, analysis, and storage ensured participants' protection and their schools' confidentiality. First, each school Head received an electronic recruitment letter of intent (Appendix A) via email which described the study and provided an overview of the questions the researcher sought to answer. Next, the researcher sent a reminder email, because the initial email was sent during many of the school's spring break, and many overlooked the email and did not respond. If participants responded with a no response, they were not in the study. If participants responded to the letter of intent with a yes, the researcher immediately provided them with a letter of informed consent (Appendix B). The letter of informed consent stated participants were willing to participate in the study and understood the potential consequences of participation. The informed letter of consent also stated that the participants were able to remove themselves from the study at any point with no risks or further obligations. The letter of informed consent was shared again during the Zoom video conference, before the interview commenced, giving the participants another opportunity to ask all questions.

Each participant was given a pseudonym to ensure anonymity for themselves and their institution. The researcher used gender-neutral pseudonyms during transcription (i.e., Participant A, School A). The researcher believed that the study did not pose any significant risks to the

participants. Even though schools were given a pseudonym, the limited number of schools posed a small potential risk when discussing the school profile. The potential risk meant public knowledge of educational school-wide practices, the barriers they faced, how they may or may not have overcome them, and personal leadership behaviors that were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. This information was likely already widely known within the school but not to the outside world.

However, by sharing school-wide equity practices, their barriers, and leadership behaviors that were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence, independent schools could have promoted a more accepting world to combat systemic racial injustice and have been a model for all schools. Personal participant risks included slight anxiety due to personal reflection during the interview and the potential need to do more. Yet, the benefits of participating in the study may have led to feelings of hope and gratitude and contributed to something larger than themselves, such as educational equity in independent schools. All interviews were conducted and recorded through Zoom. The audio was transcribed through Otter.ai (n.d.), a web-based audio transcription service provider. Any possible identification or personal data was removed from transcriptions. Only the primary researcher had access to the transcriptions and data from participants. The researcher maintained an electronic journal that contained short-hand participants' responses to interview questions. The electronic journal, transcriptions, and data collected were stored securely on the researcher's password-protected computer. Following the final dissertation defense, the data collected will be stored on the password-protected computer for three years, after which it will be destroyed.

Data Collection Procedures

Data was collected during the winter and spring months at the beginning of 2021. Each participant received both the recruitment letter of intent (Appendix A) and the informed consent letter (Appendix B) via email. After the letter of intent was received the researcher provided the letter of informed consent to each participant via email. This email encouraged the participants to read through the letter of informed consent thoroughly and provided an opportunity for any further questions or clarifications. During the email chain, the online Zoom interview was decided upon based on a mutually convenient time for both the researcher and the participant. The letter of informed consent was revisited during the Zoom interview. The researcher reminded the participants that they were not obligated to participate in the study and could have withdrawn at any time without risk. The researcher ensured both the participant and their institution's confidentiality by maintaining all information on a password-protected computer. Interviews were anticipated to last roughly about one hour. Still, the researcher had also planned to allow the participants to express all details regarding their lived experience through depth responses.

The researcher conducted a pilot interview to strengthen the reliability of the interview protocol to improve the quality of gathered data (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The pilot interview strengthened reliability of the interview questions, the follow-up questions, and the time allotment necessary to understand the conception of the specific school-wide equity practices, barriers and leadership behaviors that were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence in Southern California independent schools. The follow-up interview questions had been systematically planned as potential probing in anticipation of undetailed responses. When the official interview commenced, participants were reminded of the consent form's information,

reminded of the study's purpose, and their human subjects' protections. Participants were given an overview of the interview's researchers' recording process, recording, transcribing, and option to verify their transcription. Following the debriefing, the semi-structured interviews commenced with participant permission.

Semi-Structured Interview

The researcher used a semi-structured interview (Appendix D) as the main instrument in this study to elicit valid data. The semi-structured interview consisted of initial interview questions followed by probing or open-ended follow-up questions (Gall et al., 2007). Bernard et al. (2016) stated this instrument was valid and reliable with a long history of qualitative educational inquiry able to produce extensive data. Furthermore, educational phenomena were best understood through the school personnel's experiences, requiring qualitative interviews (Seidman, 2019). Therefore, this study sought to understand independent school Head's experiences through a recorded semi-structured interview. Instead of adopting closed questions resulting in yes or no answers, the researcher adopted an explorative, open-ended questioning approach, which allowed for probing (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The interview questions were developed from the literature regarding educational school-wide equity practices, barriers encountered, and leadership practices that were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Appendix (C) indicated the corresponding literature with each interview question, and research question. To validate the interview questions, independent expert peer reviewers deemed interview questions relevant and clear before participants received them and allowed for rich details of the educational equity phenomena in independent schools (Moutstakas, 1994). The final semi-structured interview consisted of six demographic questions and 11 interview questions.

During the interview, an electronic journal was used by the researcher to take field notes. All interview questions consisted of the inquiry question “what?” Their responses led to multiple educational equity school-wide practices, barriers and leadership behaviors that were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. The researcher used the electronic journal to quickly list the school-wide equity practices, barriers, and leadership behaviors that the participants state. The researcher had planned for the participant to not fully explain “how and why” each school-wide equity practice, barrier encountered, and leadership behavior that were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. In that case, follow-up questions were probed to provide the “how and why’s” for the school-wide equity practices, barriers encountered and leadership behaviors that were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence from Heads’ lived experience. Appendix (D) was provided to demonstrate the final semi-structured interview questions and planned follow-up questions.

Data Analysis

All interviews were audio-recorded through Zoom and then transcribed through *Otter.ai*. All participants were asked if they would like an electronic copy of their transcription for review following the interview. The researcher listened to each transcription twice, while following the verbal transcription in *Otter.ai* to verify accuracy. The first review, the researcher focused on differentiating the texts between the participant and the researcher. The second review, the researcher focused on identifying any errors and editing participants’ transcripts to ensure accuracy. Both reviews were conducted while listening to the interviews to verify accuracy of speakers and necessary edits. After all necessary edits that ensured accuracy to the participants’ transcriptions, they were finally removed of any identifying information to both the participant

and their institution. Then, the researcher analyzed the individual interview transcripts using a qualitative computer software coding program, *Hyperresearch*.

First, the researcher organized and prepared the raw data for analysis in the qualitative analysis software. An a priori codebook was established to support the initial coding process considering theoretical concepts and the participants' responses. Coding was the practice of organizing the data by bracketing chunks of data and assigning a corresponding word or category in the margins (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Maxwell (2009) referred to coding as the main technique adopted to analyze and withdraw conclusions from raw qualitative data. The goal of coding is to fracture the data and organize it into categories that enabled comparisons between the same category and between categories such that categories aided in the development of theoretical concepts (Maxwell, 2009). The categories were units of meaning represented by grouped or coded experiences generated from the language of the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). From the initial codes found from the participants' responses, the researcher generated initial level one categories, that were later grouped into level two categories, which were then grouped to create the seven final themes.

The themes were the major findings from the participants' responses. The researcher used an iterative process that involved a priori themes from the literature and subsequent emerging themes based on the gathered data. The researcher then represented the themes using direct quotes from the participants and connecting and interpreting the findings to transformational leadership theory.

Expert Peer-review Process to Establish Internal Validity

To enhance the internal validity of the data analysis process the researcher collaborated with two expert peer reviewers during the thematic analysis process (Creswell & Creswell,

2018). First, the researcher coded the first three participants' transcripts. The researcher discussed the initial coding with the first expert peer reviewer, the dissertation chair, and gained consensus. The researcher then coded all 11 transcripts in the qualitative analysis software, *Hyperresearch*. Following the coding of all 11 transcripts, a second expert peer reviewer reviewed all coding and thematic analysis in addition to the first expert peer reviewer. Both expert peer reviewers offered minor recommendations which were adopted and then granted consensus to the researcher.

Role of the Researcher

Researchers play a major role in their study, not only as the principal investigator and author but as someone who related to the participants (Acevedo et al., 2015). There were lived experiences and biases innate to the researcher that may not have been completely removable, but the researcher must have been at a minimum aware of. As Moustakas (1994) suggested, the researcher must have adopted the epoche process, also known as bracketing. Bracketing was when the researcher attempted to set aside personal experiences to mitigate a natural human bias perspective for the study's credibility (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The researcher worked in an independent school in Southern California and was conducting a research study on educational equity in independent schools. The researcher was aware of their passion and enthusiasm for the topic, but adopted the understanding that the participants' lived experience would drive the data analysis, not the researcher's enthusiasm or passion. The researcher was aware of this qualitative inquiry that originated from the researcher's real-life observations (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). However, the researcher also understood that the participants were Heads of independent schools with more significant experience in school-wide equity practices, barriers encountered, and leadership behaviors necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence.

Therefore, the researcher withheld opinions and judgments and was attentive to the participants' entire descriptive experience.

Trustworthiness

Quantitative research enhances trustworthiness through reliability, objectivity, internal validity, and external validity (Schwandt et al., 2007). However, qualitative research can enhance trustworthiness through credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. There was an evident overlap between credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. The researcher developed an audit trail, accurate details, and record of the process and preserving gathered data to increase trustworthiness (Schwandt et al., 2007).

Credibility, Dependability, Confirmability, Transferability

Credibility within the research was ensured by employing rigorous data collection methods and analysis while maintaining holistic thought and a natural investigative approach (Patton, 2014). Schwandt et al. (2007) also stated that dependability ensured a consistent data collection process, findings, and analysis throughout the study. Confirmability focused on replicating the study's process and findings that were clear and followable (Schwandt et al., 2007). Lastly, transferability was the likelihood that the findings from the study could have been transferred to alternative settings (C. Houghton et al., 2013).

Credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability were interconnected. Trustworthiness was enhanced through credibility by establishing a minimum number of participants, ten, to provide validity through trustworthiness. This study also bolstered trustworthiness by using relevant educational equity interview questions deemed clear and relevant by expert peer reviewers that produced thick and rich descriptions, and adopted bracketing, which noted the researcher's bias to mitigate judgment (Bernard et al., 2016). During

data analysis the researcher first verified the accuracy of the transcripts by listening to its entirety prior to coding. Then, the researcher collaborated with expert peer reviewers in *Hyperresearch* for verification of accuracy and interpretation of the descriptions and themes to ensure trustworthiness (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2014; Schwandt et al., 2007). The data was reviewed to applicable relevant literature that produced a complex picture of the complex phenomena of educational equity in independent schools (Creswell, 2013).

Providing clear methods created more transferability of the Heads within Southern California, if not further, and to other professional sectors. The participants' specific lived experience was at the core of the phenomenographic research. Their authentic responses regarding educational equity in independent schools should have allowed future researchers to determine transferability to other settings. Trustworthiness was enhanced through exploring alternative explanations and outliers that the audit trail depicted (Schwandt et al., 2007).

Summary

In Chapter 3, the researcher presented the methods of qualitative inquiry and provided a thorough rationale for how these methods would address educational equity in independent schools to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. The researcher also clarified their role in this research, outlined the research design, listed parameters for participation and sample selection were given as well as sample procedures. There was thoughtful consideration to human subjects and a thorough explanation of how the data was collected and analyzed. Chapter 4 of the study presented the analysis of participants' responses to the semi-structured interviews conducted.

Chapter 4: Findings

Chapter 4 contains the participants' descriptions to the semi-structured interview questions which explored descriptions of school-wide equity practices, barriers encountered, and leadership behaviors that were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion and cultural competence.

Research Questions

The three research questions that guided this phenomenographic study were:

1. How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the school-wide equity practices they utilized to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school?
2. How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the barriers they encountered as they address school-wide equity practices to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence practices at their school?
3. How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the leadership behaviors they utilized for school-wide equity practices to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence practices at their school?

Participant Profile

Eleven Heads of independent schools in Southern California participated in this study. All participants confirmed their status as Head of school, their school association with one of three umbrella associations, California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS), Los Angeles Association of Independent Schools (LAIS), or National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS), and had at least 3 years of experience as a Head of school, which were all determined in the research design as participation requirements. The participants' demographic information

was summarized below including years of experience determined as a minimum requirement necessary for participation requirements in the research design.

Initially, twelve people agreed to participate and six were identified from the researcher's personal network. Another five participants were identified through the snowballing technique. An additional candidate initially agreed to participate but attempts to schedule were unsuccessful. Therefore, the final number of candidates that completed the interview process was 11 participants.

Of the 11 participants, seven identified as male gender and four identified as female gender. Their years of experience ranged from four years as Head of school to 33 years of experience as Head of school. The age range of the 11 participants ranged from 42 years of age to 73 years of age.

Four of the 11 participants represented a K-12 independent school, two represented a K-6 independent school, two represented a 9-12 independent school however, one of which was a Catholic institution, two represented 7-12 college preparatory independent schools however, one of which was an all-girls school institution, and lastly one represented a preschool through grade 8 independent school. The school's student body ranged from 190 students to 1207 students.

Table 1 provides a summary of the participant demographics.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participants	Head of School Years of Experience	Age	Gender	Type of School	Grade Range	Number of Students
Participant A	33	68	Male	7-12 Independent	7-12	625
Participant B	16	52	Male	K-12 Independent	K-12	850
Participant C	4	44	Female	K-6 Independent	K-6	338
Participant D	17	65	Male	K-12 Independent	K-12	1150

Participants	Head of School Years of Experience	Age	Gender	Type of School	Grade Range	Number of Students
Participant E	5	52	Female	Preschool-8 Independent	Preschool - 8	280
Participant F	12	63	Male	K-12 Independent	K-12	1207
Participant G	25	73	Female	7-12 Independent All Girls School	7-12	530
Participant H	7	44	Female	K-6 Independent	K-6	190
Participant I	4	42	Male	9-12 Catholic Independent	9-12	499
Participant J	13	54	Male	9-12 Independent	9-12	253
Participant K	6	52	Male	K-12 Independent	K-12	530

Data Collection

Data collection began with sourcing, selecting, and scheduling participant interviews with Heads of independent schools that met the study's inclusion criteria. The final 11 participants, and their subsequent interviews satisfied the studies minimum requirements for participants and served as the primary source of data. Every participant participated fully with the interview process that included the six demographic questions and 11 semi-structured interview questions. There were naturally planned follow-up questions to probe for further detail, where necessary, to uncover the essence of the participants' experiences.

The interviews were conducted through the *Zoom* video conference platform and took place between April 14, 2021, and May 11, 2021. The interviews varied in length, lasting between 40 and 82 minutes. After receiving consent from the participants, the interviews were recorded through the *Zoom* video conference platform and saved to the researcher's password-protected laptop. One participant interview occurred across two separate days. Table 2 provides the date and length for each interview.

Table 2*Participant Interview Dates and Length of Recorded Interview*

Participants	Interview Date	Length of Recorded Interview (hours:minutes:seconds)
Participant A	April 14th, 2021	1:04:41
Participant B	April 16th, 2021	41:40
Participant C	April 20th, 2021	43:55
Participant D	April 21st, 2021	51:49
	April 29th, 2021	12:27
Participant E	April 22nd, 2021	1:21:52
Participant F	April 23rd, 2021	58:39
Participant G	April 27th, 2021	40:11
Participant H	April 28th, 2021	49:46
Participant I	May 5th, 2021	1:06:31
Participant J	May 7th, 2021	52:04
Participant K	May 11th, 2021	51:49

Thematic Analysis

The initial analysis of the 11 participant transcripts generated a total of 187 key concepts and 2,652 individual coded pieces of information. Upon further analysis of the 187 codes yielded 74 level one categories, which were then reduced to 26 level two categories. The level two categories were further reduced and classified into seven themes that corresponded to the research and interview questions regarding independent school wide-equity practices, barriers encountered and leadership attributes necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. The final seven themes were: (a) structural institutional alignment of school-wide equity practices; (b) engagement and education; (c) mindful strategic reflection; (d) an interpersonal and interconnected culture; (e) barriers to school-wide equity practices; (f) necessary leadership behaviors; and (g) changing a culture. Each theme and their corresponding number of individual codes are represented in Table 3.

Table 3*Analysis Results: How to Achieve Equity in Independent Schools*

The Seven Final Themes	Number of Individual Coded Passages
(1) Structural Institutional Alignment of School-wide Equity Practices	419 coded passages
(2) Engagement & Education	409 coded passages
(3) Mindful Strategic Reflection	260 coded passages
(4) An Interpersonal & Interconnected Culture	225 coded passages
(5) Barriers to School-wide Equity Practices	208 coded passages
(6) Necessary Leadership Behaviors	443 coded passages
(7) Changing a Culture	688 coded passages

The first four themes related to research question 1 and focused on school-wide equity practices.

Theme 1 - Structural Institutional Alignment of School-wide Equity Practices

Structural institutional alignment of school-wide equity practices was the embedding of the institutional diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) vision within all structural school-wide equity practices of the school and then further systematically formalizing the vision based on efficacious measures. Participants described structural institutional alignment of school-wide equity practices as necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence through two ways: aligning structural school-wide equity practices to vision and through systematic formalization. Table 4 depicts the structural institutional alignment of school-wide equity practices theme and its corresponding categories.

Table 4*Structural Institutional Alignment of School-Wide Equity Practices Theme and Categories*

Level 1 Categories	Level 2 Categories	Theme
Structural Communications	Aligning Structural School-Wide Practices to Vision	(1) Structural Institutional Alignment of School-wide Equity Practices
Funding Practices		
Community-based Partnerships, Programs & Consultants		
Recruiting For Constituency Diversity, Knowledge & Expertise		
Curriculum & Instruction	Systematic Formalization	
Authentic Strategic Plan		
School-Wide Equity Reviews		
Systematic Formalization		

Aligning Structural Practices to Vision

Aligning structural practices to vision was the acknowledgement of structural practices that were adopted because of the new vision, philosophy, commitment, goal, mission or school values. The structural school-wide practices that all participants discussed were categorized into five level one categories: structural communications; funding practices; community-based partnerships, programs, and consultants; recruiting for constituency diversity and knowledge; and curriculum and instruction.

Structural Communications. All 11 participants discussed structural school-wide equity practices that were innate to the school's foundation specifically regarding educational equity. All 11 participants mentioned structural school-wide equity practices such as their: missions, visions, and separate diversity statements; websites and physical plants; and institutional philosophies, commitments, goals, values, and expectations.

Missions, Visions, and Diversity Statements. Ten participants touched upon their mission statements and separate diversity statements as necessary structural communications which helped them achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Participants I and J affirmed the school's mission and vision were the catalyst for developing their practices in becoming an anti-racist institution:

So, our mission very specifically calls us to this work, as well as vision that has been articulated quite clearly in the last two years as we have committed to becoming to the work of becoming an anti-racist institution and saying that publicly through communications publications on our website, etc. (I)

Participant J's mission was all about making the world a healthier place:

The mission is all about, being yourself in the world, being at home in the world and understanding your place in the world and making the world a healthier and more uplifting community. The work that we do on mission all the time, comes down to that. (J)

Lastly, Participant D voiced their mission statement in every room in the school, "teach our students to think critically and creatively, act ethically, and shape a future meaning."

Websites and Physical Plants. Ten participants identified their website and physical plant as necessary structural communications which helped them achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Participant I revealed that they have been "explicit in our equal opportunity statement and being explicit on our admissions page." Participant C dove further into their website more than any other participant:

We also are building out a page on our website that is specifically focused to DEI and will contain like news stories, and dynamic content, as well as things we have done as a way to educate prospective families, prospective employees, and, frankly, sometimes our current parent body. (C)

In terms of the physical plant, two participants J and A, referred to creating spaces that encourage positive interactions. Participant J communicated:

The interior of the building is designed with the idea that kids need spaces and ways to be connected to each other, that are fluid, a lot of flop spaces before COVID. We had couches. We do not have couches right now. But that is the intention, to have these common spaces where there can be intentional and unintentional encounters with lots of different kinds of people all the time. So, the building interior has been designed with that in mind. (J)

Participant B stated that all their buildings were Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible. Lastly, Participant D referred to their multicultural center where equity and inclusion officers are available for support and their Belldgrun center, which is for innovation and service.

Institutional Philosophies, Commitments, Goals, Values, and Expectations. Ten participants described their institutional philosophies, commitments, goals, values, and expectations as necessary structural communications which helped them achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Participant H described their schools' philosophy which was to change the faculty, administration, and Board of Trustee (Board) composition and as a result more voices are now embraced. Participant I referred to their institutional commitment and expectations and how that builds an institutional culture which was totally aligned, "There will be complete and total alignment about our commitment to human dignity to equity and social justice and to building a culture of true and authentic belonging and inclusiveness." A few participants referred to their founding philosophy, such as Participant K, who voiced that their school was founded after the Rodney King riots, to create an economically, racially, and culturally integrated school, which guided their school-wide equity practices:

I think that they were adopted because I think integration had largely been a failure. And so, the founders wanted to create almost a sense of social experiment. And the school became an integrated school, that was socially racially and culturally integrated, because they felt that kids needed to live and learn together, in order to experientially be able to develop the social and emotional skills to be able to have respect for themselves, respect for others, and to be stewards of the environment. (K)

Funding Practices. Funding practices were the school-wide equity practices that provided financial assistance to constituencies. This included tuition assistance strategies, an all-inclusive funding approach and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) stipends. Every participant referred to at least one funding practice adopted at their school to help achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence.

Tuition Assistance Strategies. Ten participants described tuition assistance strategies at their schools. The most common constituency group that receives funding is the prospective family because without tuition assistance their child would likely not be able to functionally enter the school community. Most participants described a tuition assistance practice by the school to get families to enter by tapping into their endowment and using scholarships.

Participant I summed up the independent school strategy by stating:

So the number one thing is our general scholarship funding that we and our, it is a combination of monies raised and discount strategy, right, that we use them to attract students of color to create the most balanced and representative class that we can each year. (I)

Five participants described how financial assistance continued to rise and Participant's F response captured why there has been increasing financial assistance. "Over the years, there were a number of initiatives to increase the percentage of students receiving financial aid."

Participants discussed targeted funding practices such as annual funds, spring events, capital campaigns and specific outside foundational support.

All-inclusive Funding Practices. Seven of the 11 participants took funding a step further and described how their funding practices were all-inclusive and allowed students "to be able to fully access the experience of the school." Participant J stated:

We directly fundraise for diversity, equity and inclusion programs around, what we call supplemental moderated tuition, which are those things like computers, or going on trips

or taking advantage of the things that often exclude kids who have been kind of brought to the table, but really can't eat at the table. (I)

Lastly, five participants also discussed specific funding allocated toward DEI opportunities and positions at their school. Participant I stated, "our budget is a moral document and ought to be aligned with our priorities. And so if equity and social justice is a priority, you should see that as line items in the budget to fund those positions." Participant D also described funding for school personnel, "faculty that are called diversity equity inclusion specialists, they each receive a \$7500 stipend."

Community-based Partnerships, Programs, and Consultants. Community-based partnerships, programs, and consultants were community collaborations and partnerships that helped raise awareness and provided education and support of their equity mission. All participants discussed partnerships to help all constituents, however the most common partnerships were geared toward students.

Partnerships and Programs. Every participant discussed at least one community-based partnership or program, with many participants discussing multiple. Participants mentioned partnerships with organizations such as The Alliance for Minority Affairs, Axis Communications, Big Sunday, Children's Defense Fund freedom school, Education Advisory Board, Enrollment Management Association, Inclusion Dashboard, Panorama, People of Color in Independent Schools, Pollyanna Racial Literacy Curriculum, Private School Village, PS Arts, PS Science, San Gabriel Psychological Association, School on Wheels, Teen Court, Veterans Association Work2BeWell, World Series of Innovation and Young Eisner Scholars.

Participants gave an array of reasons why they were partnered with these programs. Participant D stated, "What we need here is a partnership. We do not need just a lease, we need to have something because that is really the need, for connection," and that the partnerships were

for, “Taking care of mental health at the school.” Participant K captured the overall awareness, education, and advocacy supported by community-based partnerships:

We just recently created a middle school social justice conference for this region with other schools, which combined both private and public schools really trying to prepare kids to become activists within their own school communities as a means of preparing them to be activists out in the world and vanguard leaders who can advance issues that affect bi-poc people. (K)

Consultants. All participants described consultancy as an important community-based partnership. Participant B described consultancies with Blink for “helping us to conduct an equity audit and helping us with just constructing a bias incident protocol” and Strata Genius, part search firm, because they were “actually in the search for a new DEI director.” Participant D is working with a consultant for future systematic planning and participant C described how consultants can educate the leadership team:

We have worked with a DEI consultant for the last three years, who has really advised us at a leadership’s level, whether that’s our Board of Trustees, diversity and inclusion subcommittee, or our administrative team, about how we look at each department, how we look at Diversity, Equity and Inclusion across the spectrum, and not just limited to certain areas in certain departments. (C)

Recruiting For Constituency Diversity, Knowledge, and Expertise. Diverse constituencies, knowledgeable constituents, and constituencies with expertise matter in independent schools to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Every participant described how their schools adopted these practices in two ways. First, by having diverse and knowledgeable constituents (i.e. diverse students, families, faculty, administrators and Board). Secondly, schools also had an array of personnel with unique DEI positions, titles, and support staff to achieve equity.

Diverse and Knowledgeable Constituents Necessary. Nine out of the 11 participants described necessary diverse constituencies as a means of achieving diversity, inclusion, and

cultural competence. Participant E discussed the necessity of a study body that reflects greater Los Angeles, “But the desire for a community that reflected more of Greater Los Angeles, and that allowed a broader range of students.” Participant H recognized the importance of Board diversity at the start of their tenure, as did Participant G, but also included student and faculty diversity as well:

So my job has also been to diversify the senior team, because the kids look to the leadership of the school, and I want that to reflect a commitment to diversifying the adults with whom they interact. So, student diversity has increased, we are continuing in an upward trend, significant upward trend for faculty, and for the Board. (G)

Knowledge and expertise and its impact on achieving diversity, inclusion and cultural competence in all constituencies groups was apparent from participants’ answers. Participant H stated constituency diversity and knowledge practices were, “An area that is definitely helping us achieve equity and justice and inclusion.” Participant E touched upon the importance of family knowledge and expertise, “The newer families from the last couple years, a lot of them are coming with more knowledge and expertise around these issues.”

Personnel - Titles and Positions. More than half of the participants spoke about an array of DEI positions they have created to provide support, education, and awareness to their community. There were directors of diversity, assistant directors of diversity, DEI coordinators, office of equity and inclusion, director of student well-being, and many like named positions. Participant F described the reasons behind their DEI personnel as individuals, “Who are working to help support the DEI work in their divisions, principally focused on student support and curricular changes,” and, “persons specifically devoted to outreach and support.” Participant D also explained the important role DEI personnel play in achieving diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence in independent schools:

What they do is, they help faculty, and faculty reach out to them, from I need a book that will help with this, to, I am teaching science, how can I bring more diversity into science? Actually, the two people in the Upper School had a day-long retreat with the whole science department a couple of weeks ago to talk about different ways they can do it. (D)

Curriculum and Instruction. Curriculum and instruction were the building blocks for character development designed to maximize all students' success and expand their cognitive and social function through content and instructional aspects. All participants described changing aspects of their curriculum over the years in four manners: inclusive pedagogy now; competency building; and adopted, updated, and aligned.

Inclusive Pedagogy Now. Nine of the 11 participants described necessary and immediate changes to their curriculum through inclusive pedagogy. Participant D described that their school must have acted in regard to inclusive curriculum and instruction, "You know, we have to, we have to diversify our curriculum. We need to have more voices and I really want people to look hard at their curriculum." Participant E concluded with one last reason why inclusive curriculum is critical:

If we are going to be a community that is composed of lots of different kinds of people, lots of different kinds of backgrounds, it just needs to be reflected in the curriculum, in the pedagogy, in the ways that we help kids navigate conflict, and expressing feelings instead of acting out feelings. (E)

Participants said the most important aspect of inclusive pedagogy was the approach of the teacher, not the content. Participant H urged, "Although there is a specific curriculum, it is more about how you see that curriculum." Participant referred to curiosity being greater than content:

You can have all the authors of color you want in a curriculum, but if they are not read, in a context of curiosity and inquiry and honest dialogue about the implications of these texts, you are not going to get anywhere. (I)

Competency Building. Competency building was the development of students' cognitive skills through higher functioning questions and problem solving. Five of the participants referred

to competency building as part of their curricular changes to achieve equity competence.

Participant E first described their diversity, equity, inclusion and justice (DEIJ) scope and sequence and discussion questions that help achieve equity competence and then gave many competencies questions their curriculum has added such as, “What are human rights? And how can they be protected? How does society make sense of the changing universe? What is power? What is justice?” Participant E ended with a specific equity-based competency example, “So being able to talk in a rudimentary way about difference, even at an early age, as part of some developmental milestones, and their own sort of awareness of their own identity.”

Adopted, Updated, and Aligned. Three participants discussed the adoption of set frameworks such as the C3 Framework, Pollyanna racial literacy curriculum and an anti-racist curriculum. Participant B described their curriculum adoption, “We have formally adopted a racial literacy curriculum. This one specifically comes from Pollyana, racial literacy curriculum. That is for grades K through eight. with that comes a component focused on parent education.” Participant E described how they will continue to work on their adopted curriculum, “Continuing to hone our antiracist curriculum.” All participants referred to updating curriculum in some facet, such as, Participant H referring to curriculum alignment to equity:

So, we used our own curriculum, and then took a team approach to redevelop and redesign and then make connections across the different grade levels, in order to make improvements, again, to be more equitable, to be specifically focused on social justice.
(H)

Participant B also spoke in regard to alignment by stating that there was, “A need for our curriculum to be aligned K through 12 in all disciplines.” Curriculum and instruction updates were often adopted as Participant I described as, “Actively changing, to become more diverse.” because traditional curriculum was, “The result is a decentering of old white dead male voices, and a re-centering of voices that are often marginalized. And that work is across the curriculum,

from religious studies, to English, to social studies, even to math.” Participant D’s following quote captured the essence of participants’ curriculum revamping, “We have had more curricular changes in one year than we’ve had in any other year, probably in the 49 years of the school. And I think it has been terrific.”

Systematic Formalization

Systematic formalization was the practice of both reflecting upon and ensuring efficacious equitable systems that produced the desirable equity outcomes stated in schools’ visions. Furthermore, systematic formalization allowed participants to have complete and total alignment of their institutional school-wide practices to their DEI vision. Ten of the 11 participants referred to systemic formalization using: authentic strategic plans; school-wide equity reviews; and systematic formalization processes.

Authentic Strategic Plans. Authentic strategic plans were the active review of all systemic school-wide policies adopted to identify DEI weaknesses and improved upon through actions determined by leadership. Seven of the participants described necessary authentic strategic plans to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Participant F discussed the strategic plan by stating, “We launched a new strategic plan two years ago. And there are a couple of pieces to that strategic plan that are directly related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.” Participant A also discussed the strategic plan and stated:

But to me, it is a strategic planning every five or six years. It is a chance to really take stock and say, where are we now? What progress have we made? And what are the next goals we need to take on to meet that overall objective? (A)

School-wide Equity Reviews. School-wide equity reviews were adopted by participants to collect DEI information regarding certain structural school-wide practices. Five of the participants described school-wide equity reviews as necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion,

and cultural competence. Participant B stated their equity audit is helping them to plan effective measures down the road. Participant G went through a curricular equity audit to review class and book offerings. Participant J stated when they first arrived, they did a cultural assessment to focus on their top priorities, like hiring a DEI director, which they did. Participant J also stated that they are now conducting an equity audit for grading, equity, and justice pieces:

We are now doing an equity study on equitable grading practices this year, thinking about the ways that kids are being assessed and obviously, everything that we do at our school has to do with the promotion of equity and justice and another piece. (J)

Systematic Formalization. Systematic formalization was the complete and total alignment of efficacious equity school-wide practices that produced the results that the schools' communications and vision stated. Four of the participants took the strategic plan a step further and described necessary systematic formalization alignment of their plan for the structures of the school. The participants described that they have set their initial plan in motion (i.e. a strategic plan) and needed to start focusing on a systematic formalized plan. Participant B stated:

And by conducting and evaluating our curriculum, we can start looking to look where there are gaps and pieces that are missing so that we can create a more kind of systematic way of ensuring that all students are provided with that education. (B)

Participant K who discussed systematic formalization the most, stated:

But I think that we are now in a place where we're looking at how to more intentionally and systematically do the DEI to enhance the experiential learning that goes on for our kids, and how to operationalize that in the institution. (K)

Theme 2: Engagement and Education

Engagement and education were the active engagement of all constituencies in learning opportunities, raising their overall awareness, and providing support. The three main ways that participants described engagement and education at their schools to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence was by: professional developments (PD's) and community-based

learning for all constituents; student engagement in particular; and by raising awareness, increasing exposure, and providing support to all constituents. Table 5 depicts the engagement and education theme and its corresponding categories.

Table 5

Engagement & Education Theme & Categories

Level 1 Categories	Level 2 Categories	Theme
Students, Faculty & Staff, Administration, Parents (Education) & Board	Professional Development & Community-based Learning For All Constituents	(2) Engagement & Education
Student Driven Decisions	Student Engagement in Particular	
Peer Mentorship Programming		
Students, Faculty & Staff, Administration, Board & Parents	Raising Awareness, Increasing Exposure & Providing Support to All Constituents	

PD's and Community-based Learning

PD's and community-based learning were educational opportunities the school provided to all constituents at the institution and in the community at large. PD's and community-based learning were abundant in the participants' responses and were divided into learning opportunities for: students; parents (education); Board; faculty and staff; and administrators.

Students. Eleven participants specifically stated the professional development opportunities and community-based learning opportunities they offered to students. Participants stated that they send students to the National Association of African American Studies & Affiliates (NAAAS), the National Association of Chicana and Chicana Studies (NACCS),

People of Color Conference (POCC), the Student Diversity Leadership Conference (SDLC), and the Young Women's Conference (YWC). Participant C stated their professional developments and community-based learning opportunities for students were opportunity-based:

To stretch children outside of their naturally self-centered orientation, and to help them build empathy, connections, and understanding that they have the power to, not only to engage in a community, but ultimately can as leaders, potentially change systems of inequity and create more inclusive spaces for all. (C)

Participant K described the PD's potential impact for students:

This social justice conference was very powerful for the kids, because quite often they do not have the language and question the reality of their experience, because they may be one of a few. So, I think coming together in a critical mass piece is a very important one, because I think it helps to validate people's experience, but also give them some tools to affect change within their community, and not to feel that they are silenced, or if they may be going through pain or suffering, that they do not have a way of articulating it and finding support from others. (K)

Faculty and Staff. All 11 participants stated professional development (PD) and community-based learning opportunities they offered to faculty and staff. Participants described PD's though: community-based PD's and in-house PD's.

Community-based PD's. Ten participants stated that they send faculty and staff to the anti-racist training, and the California Teacher Development Collaborative (CATDC) People of Color Conference (POCC), The Privilege Institute, and Teaching Tolerance. Participant A referred to sending faculty and staff to the CATDC:

Every time there is lots of rich programming on diversity, equity, and gender, sexual identity. It just happened and they really had a strong program. Philosophically they are in line where we want to go, and it was nice that we are able to send teachers to it, who then train others. (A)

Participant F discussed sending faculty and staff to POCC:

We send as many teachers and staff members who wish to go to POCC. Every year, we actually close school for two days, and send every employee of color who wants to go to POCC for those two days. The rest of us stayed here to do two days of workshops on anti-racism work. It is racism work, white fragility, and understanding whiteness. (F)

In-house Professional Development. Six participants discussed their own DEI professional development for education, advocacy, training, and support they conducted at their school, because as Participant B recognized, “as practitioners, we are not always the experts”. Participant K referred to building capacity in administration first, and following administration PD they are:

Focused on achieving a baseline cultural competency for all our teachers and helping them become even more intentional about facilitating culturally responsive classrooms. But we integrate all that with neuroscience, and interpersonal neurobiology, the science of learning. (K)

Participant K was focused on the faculty and staff understanding the stages of racial development and child development to, “try and craft what we do with students, based on our understanding of how learning happens most efficaciously.” Participant A stated their training with their faculty focused on expectations:

Training the Dean of students and faculty in our expectations that they did not treat students who come from School A, who are well trained, versus a kid from the elementary school that did not have that background, that somehow think they were not as bright. So, a lot of it is training faculty, in equity practice, making them aware that we are with a population that is fairly wealthy, you can get confused and think all of your students are wealthy. (A)

Participant D described their responsibility to faculty and staff in terms of necessary PD:

Our job is to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to grow and providing these pieces recognizes that not everyone grows in the same way. Some people grow enormously through a big professional development with an outside speaker, some grow much more when they reach out to a colleague, one of the specialists and can help them understand how to teach a book in a different way. So we are really trying to recognize all the different ways that people learn. (D)

Administration. Nine participants referred to necessary professional development and community-based learning opportunities for their administration. Administration education was

offered through community-based learning opportunities, such as, POCC, Stanford D School and visiting other schools; in-house training; and bringing in outside experts.

Community-based Learning Opportunities. Eight participants referred to community-based learning opportunities for administration as necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Participant I stated, “Myself, key administrators, equity and social justice taskforce members, students from the student led organizations I mentioned earlier, go to POCC on an annual basis.” Participant F described what they learned from POCC, “We learned about an initiative one school had taken to rather than continue to send their teachers to various DEI workshops around the country to do their own internal DEI workshop every year for their faculty.”

In-house Training. Five of the participants referred to training and education around the hiring, retention, and evaluation process of school personnel. Participant C described the training as, “We have done anti bias training, related to hiring practices, and particularly developed rubrics to identify cultural competence and characteristics or behaviors or attributes.” Whereas Participant E’s focus is more on underrepresented faculty, “We are doing training around retaining, retention, and evaluation of all faculty, but underrepresented faculty in particular.” Participant J stated that they build capacity through cultural competence in every person on campus, including administration, “Every person on campus is trained through cultural response to this sort of seminar workshop type thing, to think about microaggressions, to think about how we carry ourselves through the world.”

Outside Experts. Five participants described using consultants to help provide PD to administration at their school. Consultants were used to educate administration on best practices. Participant C described:

We have worked with a consultant for the last three years, who is a DEI consultant, that has really advised us at a leadership's level about how we look at each department and how we look at Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion across the spectrum, and not just limited to certain areas in certain departments. (C)

Board. Seven participants referred to the necessary Board professional development and community-based learning opportunities they offered to their Board. Board education was offered most commonly for training through bringing in outside experts, such as Visions In Education, and Blink Consultancy. Participant D captured participants responses by stating:

We brought in visions, our training group, to do training with the Board, so that we built in, reporting back to the Board and that the Board of Trustees, that they need to be educated as well and brought along. (D)

Participants E and D both stated why Board education is necessary. Participant E stated, "Training the trustees to understand why these issues are important and how they support the mission of the school," and Participant D stated, "So part of it needs to be an ongoing education of the Board. They are the governing body, and they need to really understand what is going on."

Parents. Six participants referred to professional development opportunities and community-based learning opportunities offered to parents. Parent education was provided through community-based experts and speakers, as well as in-house education from the school.

Community-based Experts and Speakers. Participant E discussed bringing in experts to help educate parents on gender identity, "With more kids identifying as non-binary, we want to continue to bring in some expertise, so that parents and teachers understand what that means for kids and how to support them." Participant D brought in experts in equity, inclusion, and social media. Participant F referred to specific names by including environmental activists Angela Davis and Winona Laduke, Native American activist Dolores Huerta, Holocaust survivor Zenon Neumark, executive director of Los Angeles Women's March Emiliana Guereca and poet Nikki Giovanni in their speakers series open to the entire community including parents.

In-house School Education. Participant F depicted necessary education from parent backlash and added further to parent education as a necessity by stating, “A parent raised her hand and said, it is not that we do not trust you. We do not have the tools to deal with these issues.” Participant B suggested that educating parents was synonymous with educating students:

We recognize that our primary mission is to educate students. In doing this work, we recognize that to educate students, we actually have to educate their parents. So, you know, insisting and implementing various education programs to educate the entire community. (B)

Participant H, who experienced several direct and defiant resistance from parents stated:

It became clear that some of our parents are not on the same page with us. So, we wanted to make sure to not undermine our relationship with them, but to educate them and to do it in a way that was so respectful of them that they came to it on their own. (H)

Participant H concluded with, “So parent education is really important.”

Student Engagement

Although participants expressed engagement within all independent constituent groups, the most abundantly engaged constituency group described by the participants was the students through student driven decisions and peer mentorship programs.

Student Driven Decisions. Eight participants described student engagement as necessary in the decision-making process to achieve diversity, inclusion and cultural competence.

Participant G described empowering the students in their own learning:

We have really put them in the position of thinking about speakers and who they want, making them responsible for finding the speakers. So, students are much more empowered than they used to be to be a part. We have had students have a huge impact on our curriculum. They have brought ideas to us, and we have incorporated them, so they are their partners in this work. (G)

Participant G went on to enlist students in their passions like climate change. Participant G “agreed to be carbon neutral by 2030” because of a passionate student. Many participants also spoke about enlisting students to help in identifying and adopting new books for their

curriculum. Participant I created, “An entirely new category of student organization called student led organizations, they needed more gravitas than club.” From that club they had their, “First Black Student Union in 65 years and we now have almost a dozen of them that students have started.” Participant J talked about their diversity and access committee, containing all constituencies groups plus students which allows the Board to:

Hear directly from kids about what the experience actually is from a diversity access lens, and they share their experience with that committee. So, they are sharing not only with themselves, but also, they are bringing their concerns, hopes and their challenges. (J)

Participant J discussed February’s soulful celebration around the black experience in America was student-led. Participant A discussed the features of their bridge on campus that were student-driven. Participant K described that they lean on students to help with their “coalition building and convergence of interests among those various affinity groups.”

Many of the community-based programs offered for students already mentioned increased engagement for students, such as teen court, where Participant D’s students served as judge and jury for LA peers:

Our students have been doing that for years with the idea of giving back to the community and also growing themselves to put themselves in situations they would not ordinarily be in. They have to figure out what someone their age did, whether it was selling drugs, beating somebody, stealing a car, or whatever it was to help them have something in place that would really be restorative justice kind of practice that brings them back in a way that they are going to recover from this and become stronger for it. (D)

Participant D explained these student engagement experiences “give voice,” “inspire kids to fight through anything” and “opens the eyes of other people about what are the real issues standing in the way of equity and inclusion.”

Peer Mentorship Programming. Peer mentorship programming was programming where students were actively engaged and educating younger students. Four participants

described peer mentoring as a necessary school-wide equity practice to achieve diversity, inclusion and cultural competence.

Participant E described, “We also do mentoring programs with older and younger children. Sometimes that allows young children of color, for instance, to see that there are older children of color on campus.” Participant J stated that they had an African American mentorship program with a less privileged school “where our kids usually do tutoring and working with the students there.” Participant D described that they had a wonderful peer led program, with older kids mentoring younger students:

There are roughly probably 50 seniors (enrolled in an applied psychology course) that are in structured roles as mentors to freshmen, which creates a whole different dynamic than at least when I was in high school where the seniors are not looking out for the freshmen. They wish them Happy birthday, they take them out to lunch, they go to their games, they go to their performances, they help them find peer tutors, they are really there for them in all sorts of ways. (D)

Participant K described the importance of their apprenticeship model of learning and mentoring:

Having them take on a role of helping to support the racial identity development of many of our students of color and students who are underrepresented, and also using those students to be able to teach the younger kids, because we feel the impact of those kids on the younger kids is profound. And so why don't we use that notion that they are the influencers to really get them to think about these issues and speak to them in a language that they can understand. Not necessarily the academic language around this, but in a language that speaks to them in a way that they understand. (K)

Raising Awareness, Increasing Exposure, and Providing Support to All Constituents

Raising awareness, increasing exposure, and providing support to constituencies were the actions independent schools took within the confinement of their walls to support, expose, and raise awareness for their constituents. The main way schools accomplished awareness, exposure and support of all constituents was through affinity groups. Raising awareness, increasing exposure, and providing support to all constituents was divided into the four constituency groups: students; faculty and staff; administrators; and parents.

Students. Nine of the participants discussed raising awareness, increasing exposure, and providing support to students through: affinity groups; inclusive DEI groups; diversity days, weeks, and celebrations.

Affinity Groups. Nine participants referred to affinity groups at their school as an adopted practice to provide support to constituency groups. Affinity groups were specific identity exploring and building groups (i.e. bi-racial student group or single parent group).

Participant J disclosed their affinity groups in detail and their adoption which met present needs:

We have support for American African American students, two different groups, we have two separate groups for Latino students, we have a group for our Asian and South Asian students, affinity groups, we have affinity groups for our LGBTQ students and a one that is not published in terms of where they meet, which is very private for kids who are considering, and that is called p 10. And we have our white anti-racist affinity group, like I mentioned, for both for students and for faculty. (J)

Participant F added how impactful their specific affinity groups are in raising awareness, increasing exposure, and increasing support for students:

They were adopted because of school philosophy, because it is who we are, because of the need, again, being responsive to the feedback we get, and affinity groups in particular give students a safe space to deal with those ouch moments, to deal with those microaggressions, to deal with the frustrations that they experience, and to and to have that feeling where I do not need to pretend to be someone else. I can be myself in these affinity spaces. (F)

All participants described affinity group spaces as inclusionary to only the group defined by the affinity group except participant K. Participant K stated affinity groups at their school were completely inclusionary with some ground rules:

Well, I think the thing that is pretty powerful in our school, how our affinity groups are, while they are for students who identify in a particular way. They also are open to students who may not be of that group. So, those students have an opportunity to learn how to be in those spaces where they are not in the majority, and they are there to be a part of it, but they are not running it. It is not a space that they control. You know, it is a space that they have been invited into and I think that has been incredibly powerful. (K)

Inclusive DEI Groups. Three participants described DEI student groups as a way they raised awareness, increased exposure, and increased support for students. Participant B already stated they created their first black student union in 65 years, followed by a dozen more.

Participant B also stated:

We have a board designated DEI committee, that is mostly admin and teachers DEI group. We have a parent organization DEI group. We have recently added an alumni DEI task force. And we have a student DEI Task Force. In addition to that, those five groups come together for what we call a DEI collaborative, so that they all kind of come together. (B)

Participant G stated that their DEI group for students was built into a capstone project:

We have created a social justice department. We have students who work in that, it is a very specific project, it is not service. It is authentic work, and they have to create a capstone in order to fulfill the requirements. (G)

Diversity Days, Weeks, and Celebrations. Three participants described diversity days, weeks, and celebrations as a way they raised awareness, increased exposure, and increased support for students. Participant B stated they took a week out of their formal studies to celebrate diversity and include workshops to compliment the curriculum. Participant D stated their diversity day is:

A diversity celebration, where we bring families to campus. And we just really have a big celebration, there are booths, there is dancing, there are speeches, there is music, it is just a real chance for all the families to come together and just celebrate the value of diversity. So that's been four years now. (D)

In addition to hosting a multicultural college counseling events every year, participant J also described their Unity Day:

Unity Day, we developed this year, which is an opportunity for kids to meet in affinity groups and talk about their experience. The whole day is devoted to that and is an opportunity for kids to meet in affinity groups and talk about their experience. (J)

Parents. Ten of the participants discussed raising awareness, increasing exposure and providing support to parents through: affinity groups; inclusive DEI groups; weekly newsletters or blurbs; and diversity days, weeks, and celebrations.

Affinity Groups. Eight participants referred to parent affinity groups with other constituencies groups, but Participant F and D explicitly stated their parent group separately.

Participant F stated:

The parent affinity groups are an offshoot of RISE. One of the newest affinity groups we launched this year was a group for parents raising students of color. That is a brand-new affinity group that just started and so these affinity groups meet frequently as well. (F)

Participant D described their parent affinity groups:

We have ended the year with affinity group celebrations where the parent affinity group runs the celebration for the students, especially the students that are graduating and welcoming in new students coming into the school in that affinity group. (D)

Participant F added how impactful affinity groups were for raising awareness, increasing exposure, and support for parents:

I think in the broadest sense, many of us have to unlearn decades of what we have been taught and learned, either directly or indirectly, right and so it is giving us all a better understanding of our blind spots, but our understanding of where we may be racist, or sexist, or homophobic or ablest, and then understanding what we need to do to move past that. (F)

Inclusive DEI Groups. Four participants described DEI parent groups as a way they raised awareness, increased exposure, and increased support for parents. Participant E stated that they have had an inclusive parent group of those with black children for some time. Participant H described their DEI parent group, salons, in more depth:

We started these parent groups, I call them salons, they are topical. I think that we are going to continue to have these opportunities for families to have conversations deeply about race and justice, and equity. We have specifically decided to use social justice as the way we are leading this and anti-racism as a way of relating this. (H)

Newsletters, Blurbs, and Website. Four participants described their newsletter, blurbs, and school websites as avenues they raised awareness, increased exposure, and increased support for parents. Participant C stated:

I write a weekly newsletter, and I am frequently bringing up some form of a topic related to DEI and then I have a letter at the beginning of that, as part of the way to educate and make people aware. (C)

Participant E stated that as they have become more aware, “They come to better understand the value, and they have been more educated, or at least read more of my blogs or whatever.”

Participant C closed with why their website and weekly newsletter updates are necessary to increase awareness, exposure, and support for parents:

I think that communication strategy has been really important for educating people for raising awareness for showing our commitment, and, and getting people excited to get involved in what ways they can too. (C)

Diversity Days, Weeks, and Celebrations. One of the diversity celebrations that was not mentioned in the students’ celebrations for the purposes of providing it here for was the tastes of School J which increased support, awareness, and exposure for parents:

Another thing that we do is a taste of School J at the beginning of the year, where we have people bring dishes from all their own home cultures. And it is one of the most celebrated events that we have here on campus. The tastes of School J has, I mean, people get to really eat but everybody you know, the but you grew up with, right? (J)

Participant A summed up why it is important for raising awareness, increasing exposure, and increasing support for parents, “So you really want to make sure that there are ways in which parents are full participants, are really able to be engaged, and know how they can support their kids.”

Faculty, Staff, Admin, and Board. Nine of the participants discussed raising awareness, increasing exposure, and providing support to faculty, staff, admin, and the Board through affinity groups and inclusive DEI groups.

Affinity groups. Ten participants referred to faculty and staff affinity groups with other constituencies groups, but Participant B explicitly stated their faculty group separately, “I should also add that we have a bi-poc affinity group just for our faculty that meets, that identifies as faculty of color and that is the support.” Participants C and E referred to affinity groups’ impact, “I think that communication strategy has been really important for educating people for raising awareness for showing our commitment, and getting people excited to get involved in what ways they can too.” Participant E stated, “Again, so that everyone understands the value of this work, what their work is around this work, how to better understand what their roles are, and how they can participate.” Participant J identified their white faculty anti-racist affinity group and that they would “continue with those kinds of affinity groups to ensure that we are all listening and thinking.”

Inclusive DEI Groups. Eight participants described DEI groups as a way they raise awareness, increase exposure, and increase support for faculty, staff, administration, and Board. Both Participants D and E built DEI groups for their Board. Participant C described their inclusivity and diversity team, “We have an inclusivity and diversity team of faculty and so that has been a really engaged group of people who met all through the summer and meet regularly.” Participant F discussed their radical inclusion for social equity (RISE) program:

We have a committee here at the school, which just recently changed its name, called RISE, which is radical inclusion for social equity as the acronym and it is a committee of parents, trustees, students, faculty, and staff. And it is really a committee that meets with our associate Head of School and faculty leaders. (F)

Lastly, Participant H described their affinity group and DEI inclusive spaces as offerings to meet constituencies needs wherever they may be cognitively and psychologically at:

So, there are folks that are brand new to and we are using the terms anti-racist, for every, we are some folks that are brand new to it that are just becoming comfortable with that terminology. And there are other folks that have been in this work for a long time. So, we

are hoping to lessen the range by providing more support for different folks, wherever they are. (H)

Theme 3: Mindful Strategic Reflection

Mindful strategic reflection is the constant review and reflective lens of policies, practices, and decision making that considers all perspectives to determine the most diverse, inclusive, and culturally responsive outcomes. The four main ways that participants described mindful strategic reflection at their schools to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence was by: updating outdated policies; feeling inclusivity and seeing inclusivity; mindful decision making; and having a reflective lens. Table 6 depicts the mindful strategic reflection theme and its corresponding categories.

Table 6

Mindful Strategic Reflection Theme & Categories

Level 1 Categories	Level 2 Categories	Theme
General Updating Outdated Policies	Updating Outdated Policies	(3) Mindful Strategic Reflection
Feeling Belonged, Welcomed & Safe	Feeling Inclusivity and Seeing Inclusivity	
Seeing Windows and Mirrors		
Feeling Comfortable, Seen & Known		
Authentic Genuine Experiences	Mindful Decision Making	
Focusing on The Right Thing to do		
Mindful School-Wide Equity Practices		
Efficacious Data Driven Practices		
Different LENS	Having a Reflective LENS	
Patience in Adopted Practices		

Updating Outdated Policies

Updating outdated policies was the active review and updating of outdated systems or insufficient practices to better achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their schools.

General Updating Outdated Policies. All participants described updating outdated policies to better achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their schools such as: hiring; admissions; retention rates; eliminated policies; grading and student assessments; behavior and discipline; faculty goals and faculty assessments; and unique examples.

Hiring. Ten participants discussed hiring updates at their schools to better achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Most participants that described hiring updates revolved around specific outreach for potential faculty of color. Participant A expressed their explanation of why updates were made:

My early practice was to make sure that with every hire, there was always a candidate of color in the finalist pool. Because I realized that I just had to do something tangible to change it up. Because at one point or another, when I became Head of school, the athletic department, every coach was white and I said to the director, where is the diversity? (A)

Participant D described how they included the office of equity inclusion in every hiring:

We redid our hiring process. We include the Office of Equity inclusion in all the hiring committees, in terms of where we get the resumes from, how we read the resumes. In the interviews, we ask people in their application before they get here to talk about their experience with equity inclusion, we do not want to hear what they are thinking about it, we want to actually hear their experience and what they have gone through. It has sent a message very clearly, as of last year, 26 people that we hired, half were people of color. (D)

Participant J described how recruitment firms play a role in equity and how they have changed their policies:

We have been working really hard to do better outreach to the non-traditional placement firms, people who have connections and different universities, rather than always going

to the Carnie Sandoe's of the world. And trying to look at the way we do our hiring in a much broader way. That is an ongoing initiative. (J)

Participant I summed up why participants were altering their hiring updates, "We are emphasizing more and more the right practices and our recruitment and hiring and onboarding and leadership development policies and practices to achieve a more diverse faculty and staff."

Admissions. Seven participants discussed admissions updates at their schools to better achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Participant C stated that they began to ask prospective families about their race and ethnicity as part of their application process:

It is optional. Someone could not fill that out. But so, that we could actually know and not make assumptions about people and if they self-disclose or self-identify, then that could further our admission strategies as well. (C)

Participant I also updated part of their application process by removing mandatory testing:

A decision that School I made two years ago was to not just say that entrance exams are not necessary, but in fact, we do not accept any entrance exam, whether it is the SSAT or the HSPT, or whatever it is, we do not accept entrance exams, we do not think that they are equitable. (I)

Other participants discussed updating their outreach efforts in attracting "underserved families, families of color, families of different backgrounds, Asian and diverse families." Participant C even stated that the deadlines they have for applications may be inequitable because they were rewarding "punctuality and people in the know."

Retention Rates. Six participants discussed updates to retention rates at their schools to better achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Participant D outwardly discussed their goal in terms of retention, "The goal is that we have families coming 100% of them stay unless for some reason it is an academic mismatch." Most of the six participants discussed retention of students of color and underrepresented, as well as retention of faculty of color. Participant B described their focus on retention of faculty of color:

We are posting all of our positions, on various listservs and whatnot, that primarily focus on faculty of color. We use search consultants to help with this and we also have educated our entire admin team who are responsible for hiring on best practices to support both hiring and retention of faculty of color. (B)

Participant E stated why the retention of diverse individuals is necessary, “Well, I think in order to truly achieve a more diverse and inclusive and equitable community, people who have historically been underrepresented at the schools need to want to stay at your school.” As a result of that philosophy Participant E is doing more, “Training around hiring and around retaining and evaluation, retention and evaluation of all faculty, but underrepresented faculty in particular.”

Eliminated Policies. Five participants discussed eliminating certain policies altogether at their schools to better achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Participant H eliminated the Pledge of Allegiance, and Participant I eliminated entrance exams. Participant A described their eliminated policy of location for school events:

For a while we would have events at people’s homes, and then you realized, we are only going to have it at the wealthiest families’ homes and how intimidating is that as you get to the gated community, for those families, with financial aid? So, we ended up having more and more events on campus. (A)

Participant G described eliminating their donor wall “One of the things we did was we eliminated the donor wall with the large gifts and everybody’s gifts are randomized.”

Grading and Student Assessments. Four participants described updating grading and student assessments. Participant A stated that:

We have looked at our grading policies to make sure that there is not bias in it and in particular, you are looking at students that may not have had the same opportunity. They ensure that they are being treated fairly. (A)

Participant B referred to developing an assessment lens capable for all ages, “We can develop a lens, an equity lens through which to look at pedagogy assessment and curriculum from kindergarten, all the way through, because I think we think about it more as a lens.”

Behavior and Discipline. Four participants described updating behavior and discipline policies. Two participants specifically referred to pursuing a restorative justice approach. One of those participants, Participant E stated:

We have pursued over the last few years more of a restorative justice approach to discipline. Really thinking about, peeling back and understanding the why of a behavior, and then addressing the why of that behavior, as opposed to only looking at the behavior and then disciplining the behavior. So then creating an opportunity for a student who when there is an infraction, to be able to repair and restore the harm, and rejoin the community as opposed to being separated. (E)

Participant C specifically referred to providing awareness and increased understanding for teachers because they may not understand behavior, particularly of students of color, that may not be categorized as traditional behavior at their school, so therefore:

We wanted our teachers to have a better understanding so all children can be successful in the school to know what is appropriate, from a child development standpoint, and then what is also appropriate from a cultural understanding standpoint. (C)

Faculty Goals and Faculty Assessments. Four participants discussed updating faculty goals and faculty assessments at their schools to better achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Participant A stated that now, “One of their professional goals is how are they going to promote our equity, and diversity goals, something everyone had to reflect and figure out what they needed to do.” Participant J has included relationships, pedagogy, growth mindset and school culture as the four attributes faculty were measured on. Participant E revamped their faculty and staff assessments to include competency metrics and added:

Because it had been several years since we had really looked at it and reviewed it. It demonstrates value, that there is something we expect faculty and staff to be incorporating in the classroom or aware of in their specific roles and responsibilities are. It gives clear benchmarks, guidelines, and clear expectations. And it is as important as some of the more traditional evaluative metrics that we have used. (E)

Unique Examples. Some updated policies were rather specific in nature, such as, the Prefect by participant A, to prevent popularity contests. Participant G discussed updating buttons to create a more inclusive environment:

When we have parents' night of classes, we created buttons and we asked the faculty what languages they felt comfortable speaking in. We had something like 42 languages, and all of our faculty wore buttons that said, I speak Spanish, I speak Korean and I, speak Chinese come up and speak to me. So, we could translate everything that was happening to family members who were insecure about coming on campus because English was a second language or not a language. They did not speak English and so to create a more inclusive community. (G)

Participant H updated their gala ticket pricing to allow for more dignity:

We went from charging all families the same price to charging families relative to their rewards and I know that seems like a very small action, but actually it allows for people to have dignity and to participate and to feel included. (H)

Participant F discussed updating their school philosophy that was unchanged for 50 years:

Realize that some of the language is outdated, and it does not adequately reflect our current practices around diversity, equity inclusion. So, we are actually just beginning that initiative right now. Looking at the philosophy, do a deep dive and make some recommendations to the Board to change. (F)

The last specific incidence was described by participant E revolved around police protocol:

We had an incident where we had to call the police, because of a threat to the school and they stayed on campus for a few days just to make sure. At first, some people did not understand that for some of our families, seeing a police car on campus was alarming. I even had an administrator who, well meaning, but tone deaf, even said to a family of color, about how reassuring it was to have for families to see a police car right when they drove onto campus. That parent was like, that is not our experience. Right? (E)

Participant E was now reviewing policies around when and how they call the police. Participant I summed up the overall intention and reasoning why independent schools and their leaders are updating their policies and procedures:

Well, they were adopted, because the old way of doing things is a combination of old curriculum, old pedagogy, old grading practices, old reliance upon standardized testing and entrance exams and all of that produce inequitable results, right? (I)

Feeling Inclusivity and Seeing Inclusivity

Constituents feeling inclusivity and seeing inclusivity was the sense of belonging and pride constituents feel being part of a school community that was inclusive, diverse, and culturally competent. It was the visual representation of seeing them in mirrors reflected in the curriculum and personnel at the school as well as the visual representation of a window that depicts all of Los Angeles. Participants described constituents feeling inclusivity and seeing inclusivity in five manners: feeling belonged and welcomed; feeling safe; seeing windows and mirrors; feeling seen and known; and feeling comfortable.

Feeling Belonged and Welcomed. Nine of the participants described feeling welcomed and a sense of belonging as necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. Participant A discussed how programs must be designed, “You have to figure out what are the programs that you need to create to make sure people feel welcomed, to make sure they belong.” Participant A asked many situational questions such as:

How are we going to make sure every parent has a sense of belonging? How can we do a better job of meeting our goal of creating a diverse student body in which students really feel fully supported, and feel like they belong? (A)

Participant E’s tagline included belonging:

Our tagline is, a positive equation for achievement that every child should have the opportunity, intellectually, socially, emotionally, ethically, and physically to fulfill their promise, and only when they feel and truly have belonging and ownership at a school, that is when they are able to fulfill those promises. (E)

Participant G described that they are actively, “Working not to be a school where kids feel like second class citizens for any reason, you know, they have to feel ownership in this school.”

Participant D states that it is important to feel belonged and supported by the community:

Well, they really achieve community in the sense of community and when you think, when you can feel like you are part of the community, the extra effort it takes to really look at equity and inclusion is worthwhile and not intimidating to people. They know

they are going to be supported by their community, so they are willing to take those extra steps. (D)

Feeling Safe. Eight of the participants described feeling safe as necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. Participant J urged that students needed to be able to practice brave and safe spaces, which is why their affinity groups were adopted:

They were adopted because kids need support, they need a critical mass, to know they can go and figure out with other people in a safe place, what is this thing that I am experiencing? Because I cannot say it out loud in my classroom, necessarily, but I am feeling these things and they need a space to do that. (J)

Participant E talked about parents feeling safe:

Whether it is families that felt like, thought I was raising my kids right, to talk about color blindness. And now I realize I did that wrong, and I feel hurt. It is like, okay? Well how do you help? How do you create a safe space, not a space free of discomfort, that is different, but a safe space for a container for people to be able to explore what this word means to them, is really important. (E)

Last, Participant A talks about students feeling safe and the changes they made to ensure that:

In talking to counselors, and students, they said, “You know, sometimes we kind of want to privately talk to the counselor, we do not really want to go to the front desk and say, I got a problem today.” So, we added side doors, so that people could sneak into the counselor’s office of the deans, like under the radar, not be seen or kind of slip out in the quiet. (A)

Seeing Windows and Mirrors. Seven of the participants described seeing windows and mirrors as necessary to equity that achieved diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. An eight-grade teacher at School D coined the term windows and mirrors, described it to Participant D, who then stated:

As a student, you are going to look into windows and see other people who are different from you. And you are going to learn about what their life is like. There also needs to be mirrors, where you see yourself reflected back. Our goal is to make sure that everyone has mirrors and windows, and it is not all windows, and it is not all mirrors. (D)

Both participants G and H described why seeing windows and mirrors was important to them:

Participant G stated, “I think the number one issue for us was hiring faculty, not just training faculty, but actually hiring more bi-poc faculty members. Because if the kids cannot see people who look like them, they cannot identify.” Participant H stated:

We felt that it was really important to start to reflect in our faculty, administration, and board, the families that were actually here. And so, it was really important for children to be able to see themselves in the classroom, in their teachers and their friends. (H)

Participant J stated that it was necessary independent schools did not tokenize kids:

We cannot tokenize kids and we cannot have kids just stop reading, as you know, I’m one of one here. So, the importance of having a critical mass of groups of students who can relate to one another, and also faculty who look like them, or have some shared experience is critical to ensuring that our mission works that we are able to teach the way that we believe is the right way here at School J. (J)

Feeling Comfortable. Six of the participants described feeling comfortable as necessary to equity that achieved diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. Participant A stated that when it comes to participation in activities, “That there is real equity and looking at, it is where people are quietly not there, so it is realizing students would benefit from the support of their parents, but did the parents feel comfortable coming in?” School D hosts a gay and lesbian prom every year and Participant D explained that school-wide equity practice in further detail:

So we reach out to all the other independent schools and invite anyone that wants to come to a prom, and they know the focus, but it is for anybody that wants to come. But it is really intended for students that identify as gay, lesbian, transsexual or in that area, so that they can come and be 100% comfortable with whoever they want to be. (D)

Participant J described comfortable curriculum where students see themselves and it impact it has on achieving diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence:

When students have a curriculum that is approachable, and relatable, they think better, and they work together better, and they are more invested. They can achieve better and because of that, we found that students are extremely committed to our school. (J)

Feeling Seen and Known. Four of the participants described feeling seen or known as necessary to equity that achieved diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school.

Participant D stated:

I want students to graduate here to feel like they have been seen, I do not want them to, especially students of color to feel like I got a great education, but I was never really seen for who I am. I want it to be that I got a great education and school saw me for exactly who I was. (D)

Participant F offered a quote to describe feeling seen and its importance at their school:

There is a quote from the poet, Adrienne Rich, and she wrote that when someone with authority, a teacher, describes the world and you were not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing. And so, what I keep putting forth for the faculty is, our kids need to be able to see themselves in the curriculum. That is our number one goal here. (F)

As a result of kids being able to see themselves in the curriculum, Participant F stated it achieved equity because “more and more voices are being represented.”

Mindful Decision Making

Mindful decision making was the adoption of practices and experiences that have been carefully thought out focusing on the notion, it was the right thing to do. Participants described mindful decision making in four manners: authentic genuine experiences; efficacious data driven practices; focusing on the right thing to do; and mindful school-wide equity practices.

Authentic Genuine Experiences. Eight of the participants described authentic genuine experiences as necessary to equity that achieved diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. Participant A described authentic genuine experiences by acknowledging students that made it through to graduation, but, “were they engaged or were they kind of just doing school?” Two participants A and E gave clear depictions of providing authentic genuine experiences. Participant E reaffirmed student authentic, genuine experiences:

I think in independent schools, for children of color, for instance, if we are talking about racial diversity. There comes a cost, you get this great education, and it might unlock the doors if it is a great high school, or a college experience, and an ability to advance yourself and have a kind of satisfying career. But the cost is that you have to compromise yourself or hide your identity, or in some cases be embarrassed or humiliated or feel isolated, or tokenized, or whatever, at certain schools, because the schools have not been interested in budging, they have been interested in the quantitative nature of diversity, and the numbers that come with diversity, but they are not really interested in, in whether or not families belong. (E)

Participant A referred to authenticity in their communications:

The question is, how much did the photographer really try to wait, to make sure all the kids of color are in that picture that you took for the mission brochure? To me, it is how do you make sure what you do is genuine and realize you have to build trust. So, if you know, your target community has to feel that what you are doing is genuine, it is not just talk, and you have to find ways of proving that it is genuine. (A)

Focus on The Right Thing to Do. Seven of the participants described focusing on the right thing to do as necessary to achieve equity that achieved diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. Participant H described achieving diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence as an imperative:

We all kind of agreed after that, that this was really work that we needed to be doing regularly, it was not a one and done, it was a we are going to do it, we are going to reflect on it, we are going to revisit it, and we are going to ask tough questions about this. We have just continued that work, it is just an imperative. (H)

Participant I explained the right thing to do had been long avoided and offered positive sentiments about schools that had actively updated their approach:

Schools were put in a very good, but uncomfortable position of having to deal with their pasts and their current realities regarding students of color. Schools and school leaders that responded well leaned into that discomfort, because they knew it was the right thing to do, because they knew that their current students and their alumni, demanded it, I think weathered that well, and came out knowing that we needed to do a lot of things differently, and started talking more explicitly about all of these topics, which, for a long time, they had been avoided. (I)

Both participants C and J responded to the follow-up interview question, “Why were these school-wide equity practices adopted,” with, “Because it is the right thing to do.”

Mindful School-wide Equity Practices. Six of the participants described mindful school-wide equity practices as necessary to equity that achieved diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. A few of the participants described financially mindful practices. Participant F specifically described the sustainability of their increasing financial aid:

Next to salaries, it is the second largest line item in our budget, and we have become very very worried about how sustainable that number is. As independent school tuitions continue to go up and squeeze out. It is not the middle class, it is the upper middle class, right, that are being squeezed out. (F)

Participant E described mindful investing where it will pay dividends in terms of people wanting to be a part of the community, creating a virtuous cycle, through mindful investing. Participants also described mindful inclusiveness in their admissions practices such as Participant G:

A lot of times when we were serving families, when I first started, we were socioeconomically in a different tier, they were not necessarily fully engaged in this full school life and the inclusion awards allowed them to do that with dignity. (G)

Participant C discussed their admission approach as a mindful consciousness with a focus of how they could further equity initiatives:

We approach our admissions process with consciousness in regard to race, ethnicity, geographic diversity, family structure, diversity, socio economic need and looking to increase our number of students of color especially in historically underrepresented categories. As we go through that process of determining if all of these students are mission appropriate and would thrive here, how do we feel like we can further these initiatives related to diversity, equity and inclusion. (C)

Efficacious Data Driven Practices. Five of the participants described data driven practices as necessary to equity that achieves diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school, however, only two participants described the real efficacy of their practices. Participant B who described efficacious data driven practices the most, stated the difficulty in finding legitimate measurements to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence:

I think one of our challenges is that as we introduce these different initiatives, having some kind of way of measuring efficacy. I would have to say that any kind of

measurement is purely anecdotal. They were designed without kind of ahead of time, with how we would actually track their impact. (B)

Participant B went on to conclude because the school-wide practices were designed ahead of measurements that they:

We are actually doing a comprehensive equity audit and it is specifically part of the work that we have is to try to create some measures that are said to enable us to actually measure our effectiveness down the road. (B)

Having a Reflective Lens

A reflective lens was the constant and continual review of the equity practices and policies within an institution through different lenses. Participants described having a reflective lens in two manners: different lenses; and patience if not done right.

Different Lenses. Eight participants described mindful school-wide equity practices as necessary to equity that achieved diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. Many participants talked about lenses, such as a DEI and anti-racism lens, for behavior, gender identification, admissions, handbook language and food for all. One of the most common lenses that was referred to was curriculum. Participant G depicted curriculum lenses effects:

How do we reflect the richness and diversity of our community and allow them to have a voice that is part of this rich culture, if it is Anglo Saxon writers only, and so that there is a sense of national pride? Every story about black African Americans does not have to be, although it is a significant part of history, it does not have to be wedded in slavery and oppression. But it can also be lyrical, beautiful, and inclusive. (G)

When asked about how to overcome personal limitation barriers, Participant D responded with, “I do not think it is anything you ever overcome, you just keep doing, you keep looking at things from different ways.” Participant K offered the most unique perspective and suggested that diversity, equity, and inclusion work was the “flashlight” or lens for the whole school:

It becomes a flashlight to illuminate what is working and what is not. I think you are simply looking at the school through this lens, you are scrutinizing it through the lens of DEI, which casts a light on the overall health, the overall system, the overall practices,

the overall processes. That is why I think it is a tool for growth and transformation in schools, if you use it correctly. (K)

Patience in Adopting Practices. Four of the participants described adopting practices with patience as necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence, because without patience, resentment or barriers could have accumulated. Participant I stated why patience was necessary with teachers, “When a teacher is asked to teach in a different way to grade in a different way. There is a grieving process that happens and if it is not handled well, it produces resentment.” The participant that appeared to be the most mindful and adopted patience in their practices was Participant E, who stated patience was affected by how well they know their community, “Before pacing, know your community well enough to know what they can and cannot sort of tolerate at a particular pace while also insisting on the importance of moving some initiatives.” Participant E described their patience in adopting affinity groups:

We were very careful not to put our foot forward with affinity groups until we really had a strong foundation, so people understood what they were, because I think sometimes, they are misinterpreted as segregation or exclusionary. Why are you saying you want an inclusive community when you are separating kids by race, often the affinity groups are racial, but they do not have to be, right? They could be children of divorced parents, they could be kids who learn differently or whatever. (E)

DEI took mindful patience and time to do right, as Participant E clearly depicted:

The time it takes to do this to do it right, the time and energy and investment it takes to do it and do it well. The time it takes to have one on one conversations with faculty or parents who do not understand the value of it, and then funding and resources so we can really do it right. (E)

Theme 4: An Interpersonal and Interconnected Culture

An interpersonal and interconnected culture was the personal and institutional connectedness, interdependency, and togetherness that was innate for independent schools to achieve educational equity. The four main ways that participants described an interpersonal and interconnected culture at their schools in order to achieve diversity, inclusion and cultural

competence was by: community perception and feedback matter to identify perceived needs; it is an all-connected school culture; relationships and relations; and courageous dialogue from all constituents. Table 7 depicts the interpersonal and interconnected theme and its corresponding categories.

Table 7

An Interpersonal and Interconnected Theme and Categories

Level 1 Categories	Level 2 Categories	Theme
Gather Community Perception	Community Perception & Feedback Matter to Identify Perceived Needs	(4) An Interpersonal & Interconnected Culture
Perceived Needs		
School Culture is All-connected	It is an All-connected School Culture	
Imperative Shared Buy-in and Laying The Equity Foundation		
Establishing Shared Language		
Everyone Benefits		
Serving Community For The Greater Good		
Personal Constituency Relationships	Relationships & Relations	
Personal Partnerships Within Leadership		
Get The Right People on Board		
Independent Schools Should Be Called Interdependent Schools		
Minimum Dialogue Necessary	Courageous Dialogue From All Constituents	
Courageous Conversations Are The Gold Standard		

Community Perception and Feedback Matter to Identify Perceived Needs

When participants adopted a reflective lens and conducted school-wide equity reviews, they were essentially gathering community feedback to identify perceived needs. Eight

participants identified community perceptions and feedback mattered, in identifying perceived needs for the community through gathering community perception and perceived needs.

Gather Community Perception. Six of the participants described gathering community perception as necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion and cultural competence through faculty, student, and community perception. Participant A described how faculty perception was necessary when looking at competencies in establishing support for the faculty:

Core competencies, and how do you teach these things? What are the things that we already are doing? What are the things we need to do better? Then that gets tied to our professional development program? So, we will say the faculty each year, kind of what goals are we working on? Where are your natural strengths? What do you need to do to help strengthen it? What can we do to support you? So, part of it is just helping school-wide things, but also, interpersonal ones, that are really individual, to how we can support key members of the faculty. (A)

Participant A also depicted how gathering student perspective was necessary in empowering students and bringing their perceived needs to life:

One of the things we have done every step of the way, which has been really helpful, I always get the students to give me their input. I always invite the students and say here is what we are thinking about, give me your perspective. So, students said we want grass, we want plants. We went back to the architect, and they said you cannot put grass and plants on a bridge, and I said, “Well tell me how you could?” And they came back with a watering system and drainage. (A)

Gathering community perception was depicted by participant F as they responded to a perceived need from a community member about their curriculum deficit:

From time to time someone will point out to us a deficit in our curriculum. So, two great examples I have around that what one was 20 years ago, when the school was realizing that we were we were getting more and more students at the school who had same gender parents, we had no program or curriculum, particularly the elementary school level on different kinds of families, or what does it mean to be gay. So, we created and launched a K-5 curriculum looking at LGBT issues in age-appropriate developmental ways. (F)

Lastly, Participant E described they are planning to do a climate survey, and gathering perception from constituencies so that, “Our school policies and procedures, to ensure that our, you know, our impact as an institution matches our intentions.”

Perceived Needs. Six of the participants described identifying perceived needs as necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion and cultural competence through faculty, student, and community perception. Participant K stated that at School K, as with everything else, “Someone identified a need.” Participant B described a perceived need for additional support for students and ultimately affinity groups were adopted. Participant H described the perceived need from the community to have more mirrors in their Board of Trustees:

We decided to, at the governance level, to make a decision to correct that and to provide more gender balance, to provide more racial and ethnic balance on the Board. So that became a concerted effort by the Board of Trustees. Part of it is that when they had gone through my search, there had been something that percolated up from the community as a desired need. So, the Board did have that as an action step and then they were able to achieve it. (H)

Participant F summed up the importance of why identifying perceived needs from gathering community perceptions:

I think I would also add to the why, is because there is a need to do it, not only because even today, there are still far too many people in our community who are feeling marginalized, or unseen and because of the work that needs to happen in our greater community, where our society is, where our world is, where our country is, right. So I think that is the why. (F)

It Is an All-connected School Culture

An all-connected school culture was the acknowledgement that in independent schools, everything was connected to everything, and every action had corresponding consequences in every facet of the community. Ten participants identified an all-connected school culture in their responses through five manners: the school culture is all connected; imperative shared buy-in

and laying the groundwork; establishing shared language; sharing that everyone benefits; and serving the community for the greater good.

School Culture is All-connected. Seven of the participants described an all-connected school culture as necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion and cultural competence at their schools. A school culture that is all connected beats as one, as Participant D depicted:

I think it is also knowing how to connect with different constituencies from the board, which is really about governance and how working with them, to the kindergarten students in understanding what their perspective on things are, and everything that is in between, from the faculty and staff, to the custodial staff to the whole sort of thrum of the community and how you can, the more ways you can think of how can we get this all beating is one is really important (D)

Participant D concluded with, “You cannot leave any major initiative in isolation. It is connected to everything else.” Participants described an all-connected school culture with every policy, program and decision they made was connected to everything else. Participant I described how policies were connected to humans which were connected to behaviors, which were connected to the institution, which was connected to the culture:

But policies are incredibly important for achieving these goals. Your policies have to be aligned to your mission and your vision and your philosophy. And those policies will help determine the very behaviors that will create a more equitable community. Because if you do not change policies, you do not change behaviors, what gets turned into a policy translates into behaviors. (I)

Participant E stated that everything must be approached in a DEI facet, it cannot be just curriculum, but rather the entire culture of the school must be connected:

If we are not approaching this in every facet of the school, every department, every leadership level, every process, and procedure. We have looked at the handbook from this lens, we have looked at hiring processes, it all just has to be incorporated into the institution writ large and not simply, we are reading some more books with quote, unquote, diverse characters. Done right, it has to really be holistic, because it is all interconnected, it is just really important. (E)

Perhaps once the school culture was truly all connected, independent school leaders may have responded as Participant K did, referring to their connected culture as woven into the air:

Well, I think that it is really interesting, because people used to ask us at School K, do you have a diversity program? And everyone would laugh because, we are like, diversity program? The school is the diversity program, because it is so woven into the air that we breathe, it is really hard for people to talk about it as a thing, but it is constantly a part of the culture. (K)

Imperative Shared Buy-in and Laying The Equity Foundation. Six of the participants described imperative shared buy-in and laying the equity groundwork within their community as necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their schools. Both Participant H and Participant I discussed laying the equity foundation for their community and director's health before diving into a full-time equity and social justice director:

One of the things that is really clear, both from the literature, and if you ever actually talk to the DEI practitioners is that the number one thing that affects the DEI practitioners is burnout. Schools often make the mistake of hiring a full-time person before preparing the school for the work. We have committed to a two plus year process of doing a lot of work internally, so that when we do hire this full time ESJ director, they will be set up for success and not set up for burnout. (I)

Participant E described both imperative shared buy-in and laying the equity foundation as necessary for families to fully participate:

It is really important, because I think without laying that groundwork, and having buy-in, or at least clarity about why we are doing it, whether families agree, or they want to participate fully in this process. They need to understand why it is important, otherwise, they will recoil, and families of color will say that school has good intentions or, we do love these elements, but it is not a tradeoff that I feel willing to make for my child. (E)

Participant I took imperative shared buy-in a step further and explicitly stated without it, no school-wide equity practice designed to achieve diversity, inclusion, or cultural competence will work:

Not a single thing that we have talked about so far, will work, will produce the results that we want, if the majority of people in the community, and I am talking about the adults, primarily at this point, the vast majority, commit in some meaningful way to do

this work internally, in themselves in their hearts and minds. If it is purely an external thing, or if it is purely work that those people over there need to do. We are not going to get anywhere. (I)

Establishing Shared Language. Five of the participants described establishing shared language within their community as necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their schools. Participant E described that they have been working the past few years to develop shared language and shared understanding of going beyond diversity to create an equitable and inclusive community. Participant E then added why establishing shared language was necessary to achieve equity:

When we use this language, and we have these structures in place, it just becomes built into the foundation, it becomes part of the foundation of the school and then people are not questioning it. Because it just becomes something that everyone is sort of conversing about and practicing, I guess. (E)

Participant I described their work on shared language and alignment of the mission, vision, and philosophy on equity and social justice in partnership with their health care system, and concluded that the shared language adoption would produce, “Complete and total alignment about our commitment to human dignity to equity and social justice and to building a culture of true and authentic belonging and inclusiveness at the school.”

Everyone Benefits. Five of the participants described the ideology of everyone benefits within their community as a result of adopting school-wide equity practices designed to achieve diversity, inclusion and cultural competence. Participant A depicted explaining the ideology of everyone benefiting to the community as a result of financial support:

I come to our community and say, you can help someone else’s child and then someone else can help your child and in between us all, we can get all our kids, kind of doors open. So that they will be able to be successful. So it is really helping to make sure that when it comes to financial aid, it is support throughout people’s lives, not just turning to yours at School A. (A)

Participant A also referred to how they can help all constituency groups understand that a diverse student body is going to help everyone. Participant D included that students must understand as well, “The sooner our students who are going to be leaders understand the VA perspective, the better it is going to be for everybody.” Participant D expanded upon their belief further and shared that they thought a particular percentage of a racial group, white people, needed to be convinced that everyone wins when diversity is widely accepted:

The barrier is much more of an intellectual, interpersonal one, where the people that have typically been in privileged positions, typically white people. Not most white people, but some feel like they are losing something. The challenge then, is to convince them that nobody is losing this, this is one of those win wins, that when you are willing to look at your privilege, and let go of some of it, the differences are going to come back to you, the changes are going to come back to you in all sorts of unexpected ways. (D)

Serving The Community For The Greater Good. Five of the participants described serving the community for the greater good as necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their schools. Three participants, I, J and K described that serving the community for the greater good was foundational to their institutions and missions. Participant I stated that for 100 years there had been a “deep commitment to serving the other, and responding to the needs in front of you, no matter who it is that has those needs.” Participant J shared how serving the community for the common good was necessary for the success of their institution:

It is so foundational, the philosophy, connected to the mission, is always about and always begins with who every student is. We serve. We serve students best here at School J when we understand what they carry with them. And when we understand what they are carrying with them in a way that we can build a curriculum around their opportunities to find their voice and themselves within it. (J)

Participant K shared that their mission was developing students into curious beings of the world and expanding those beings to help them serve the common good. Participant K dove further into their description process of serving the community for the common good:

I think it becomes a process of trying to help people reconceptualize that there is something in it for all of us, that by giving up something, you also are creating something where everybody can thrive, which ultimately helps all of us, it serves the common good, but I think it is hard to get people out of that piece of, well, this is all good and well, but not in my neighborhood. (K)

Relationships and Relations

Relationships and relations were the partnerships built outside of the school walls, combined with the strengthening of bonds within. Ten of the participants described relationships and relations as necessary to foster in independent schools to achieve diversity, inclusion in three manners: personal constituency relationships; personal partnerships within leadership; getting the right people on board; and independent schools should actually be called interdependent.

Personal Constituency Relationships. Eight of the participants described personal constituency relationships as necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their schools. As the leader, Participant K shed light on the amount of people they have to connect with every day:

I find that I have a wide range of people that I need to connect to, and I need to, no matter what sort of generally comes up, sometimes, I need to still sort of hold their humanity and afford them humanity, so that I can understand their story and their complexity and their journey and where they come from. (K)

Participant H referred to creating spaces where relationships only grow stronger:

What we do well is that we create spaces where we can, without damaging our relationships, because it is strong relational kind of work. And so, we do not damage the relationships. But we definitely have honest conversations with each other. And so again, as a full community, that is important. (H)

Participant C referred to the student teacher relationship, and in that regard, “If you do not understand your students, you cannot really teach them as a teacher, like, their relationship is first.” Participant K described if schools put people first then it should be reflected upon

investing in people, not buildings, such as great teachers that are then able to connect and understand their students:

I think that it is a matter of priorities, we always say because we have foregone probably \$120 million over the course of 26 years. We could have had a campus like another peer school, but instead, it has always been a priority to invest in people, not buildings and we invest in financial aid, and in having a great teacher in every classroom. (K)

Personal Partnerships Within Leadership. Five of the participants described personal partnerships within leadership as necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their schools. Participants described shared leadership amongst leaders at the school as a much better way to approach DEI than a hierarchical approach. Participant J stated the hierarchical structure matters, that personal partnerships were necessary, and as a leader they must allow others to shape the vision, “When there is a multifaceted group of people who are shaping that vision together, then that is going to be better for kids every time, rather than one guy sitting in his office, writing it down.” Participant I and participant E talked about how they are carving out more of the budget to support that shared leadership model. Participant E further explained that the new position would not just be another DEI leader, but specially referred to them as a senior administrator, “I would love more money to hire a full-time senior administrator who works with all of our different groups, around equity, diversity, equity, inclusion, anti-racism.” Participant D explained that personal partnerships even at their level are beneficial because then no one operates alone. Participant D specifically stated, “I really believe in teams and partnerships. So, there is nobody that operates singularly at the school.”

Getting The Right People on Board. Five of the participants described that independent schools should be getting the right people on board as necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their schools. If independent schools always faced opposition from constituencies (Participant H), or demonstrated apathy (Participant I), it would be rather difficult

to move the equity mission forward. To prevent this, Participant A stated as a leader, you needed to surround yourself with really smart people and listen to them. Participant A also described that independent schools need so get the right teachers, admin, allies, school leaders, and parent leaders on board:

Someone could be a great administrator or a great teacher. But if I realized that they were not on board. If this was something important to me, I just could not afford having someone that was not on board. So early on is finding those right allies, then it was when we did hiring, looking for other school leaders, looking for people that I knew shared that commitment and it was not just the people I hired, it was also paying attention to who was the parent organization president, whom I bring up as the next person making sure that person, philosophically was in line, when you look at parent leaders at each grade level, making sure those people are the ones that get what you are trying to do. (A)

Participants E, H, and I all described that they have supportive constituencies at their school such as, a supportive Board, supportive admin team, teachers, majority of families. These supportive constituencies were the individuals that schools want to get on board because they “want to be a part of this,” were, “committed to the work,” and could have at least a “conversation without having open opposition.”

Independent Schools Should Actually Be Called Interdependent. Three of the participants described that independent schools should be potentially called interdependent because of their interdependency on others in the community. Two of the participants went in depth on this idea. Participant A described jealousy for the connectedness of schools in the Bay area, because local independent high schools in the area did not always partner well together:

We do not often partner well together, particularly the high schools we tend to somehow be way more competitive than we should be. I do not know what that is about. But one of the things I noticed in talking with schools in the Bay Area, is they had really collaborated and created this teaching partnership that really looked at teaching, but also equity and diversity. So, it was really the idea of banding together, and creating common professional development opportunities for those collections of schools. (A)

Participant I described independent school as a community of communities and that they were in fact interdependent, not independent:

It would also be foolish to think that we are independent in some absolute way. We are interdependent. We are a community, in communities and of communities. So recognizing and taking seriously our interdependence with other independent schools, with larger communities and the organizations, the non-profits, local governments, and public schools down the road, how we can share resources and develop programs together that benefit all of our schools. I think that is part and parcel of equity work that we are starting to do. So, community engagement and this community partnership is already huge, and it is only going to grow in its importance. (I)

Courageous Dialogue From All Constituents

Courageous dialogue from all constituencies was the acknowledgement that all constituencies must have been willing to engage in dialogue at a minimum, not just the Head of school. Courageous dialogue from all constituencies recognized that engaging in dialogue was a minimum and courageous dialogue was the gold standard, again not just the Head of school.

Minimum Dialogue Necessary. Ten of the participants described minimum dialogue as necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion and cultural competence at their schools. Participant A described that at some point during the year all constituencies, “students, alumni, faculty, trustees, administrators,” needed to “sit down and talk together and part of it is just listening to each other.” Participant G expressed that constituencies need to upscale the content of their conversations to navigate the polarized world in wake of the pandemic:

As we continue to function in this very polarized society, I think more, developing upskilling around how to have productive conversations with people who think differently from you, and how to listen, in a true deep and active way will be really important, especially in the wake of the pandemic. (G)

Courageous Conversations Are The Gold Standard. Five of the participants described courageous dialogue from all constituents as necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and

cultural competence at their schools. Participant E described how their shared language had given a baseline dialogue for all constituencies:

Well, so we have worked over the years to develop some shared language, some shared understanding of what has to go beyond diversity and to create a more equitable and inclusive community, what that would mean, everything from, learning how to have courageous conversations with one another. (E)

As a response to parent requests in regard to the murder of George Floyd, Participant H described that they learned their community needed to have braver conversations:

I think in response to parent requests, parent perceived need after last year, in June, we met, pardon me, we met together as a faculty after the murder of George Floyd and we quickly realized again, that we needed to have braver conversations. (H)

Participant I described meaningful critical dialogue within their constituencies, “We talk quite explicitly and quite often about both diversity within our various constituencies and what cultural competency is in each of those constituencies,” and explained further that the ethos of the school helped foster courageous conversations within all constituency groups:

It is combining content in the curriculum with pedagogy and really even deeper than pedagogy, the learning environment, this sort of ethos in the classroom, that creates opportunities for actual, meaningful critical dialogue, so from students, we talked about it in the classroom, and they constantly engage in conversation about this faculty and staff as well. (I)

Theme 5 related to research question 2 and focused on school-wide equity practice barriers.

Theme 5: Barriers to School-wide Equity Practices

A barrier is any physical or perceived obstacle that prevents the forward mobility or adoption of the school-wide equity practices. The four main barriers that participants described in regard to their school-wide equity practices to achieve increased diversity, inclusion and cultural competence were: the unawareness of the need to adapt; community perception; lack of resources and geographics; and direct and defiant resistance to change. Participants also offered

strategies they have planned to overcome those barriers to school-wide equity practices. Table 8 depicts the barriers to school-wide equity practices theme and its corresponding categories.

Table 8

Barriers To School-wide Equity Practices Theme & Categories

Level 1 Categories	Level 2 Categories	Theme
Lack of Education & Understanding Reluctance (Hesitancy & Lack of Commitment) Fear & Anxiety Personal Bias & Limitations	Unawareness of the Need to Adapt	(5) Barriers to School-wide Equity Practices
General Community Perception General Attitudes & Exhausted Assumptions	Community Perception	
Lack of Financial Resources Enrollment & Hiring Headwinds Geographic Location Time	Lack Of Resources & Geographics	
Direct Resistance Prejudice & Home Life	Direct & Defiant Resistance to Change	
Increased Education & Understanding Building Relationships & Trust Engaging Constituencies in Dialogue	Strategies to Overcome School- wide Equity Practices	

Unawareness of the Need to Adapt

The unawareness of the need to adapt was the overall lack of awareness or education which hindered participants' capacity to change. All participants described an unawareness of the need to adapt in many ways through: lack of education or awareness; hesitancy; constituency

reluctance or hesitancy and lack of commitment; constituents fear and anxiety; constituents privilege; and constituents personal bias and limitations.

Lack of Education or Understanding. All 11 participants described constituencies at their respective institutions having an unawareness of the need to adapt. Participants C clearly depicted a lack of education and lack of understanding barrier by stating:

Some barriers that exist are sometimes just a lack of awareness and lack of understanding and lack of, you know, sort of that, well, this is to help other people. A lack of understanding how Diversity, Equity and Inclusion or equity practices help everyone, right, like benefit the entire community. (C)

Participant K described how a lack of understanding in organizational change was a barrier in their community, “I think that people don’t necessarily understand organizational change and how it happens. And how to manage organizational change.”

Hesitancy. There were seven participants that described hesitancy as a barrier to school-wide equity practices. Participants B and F describe a lack of commitment as a barrier respectively, “A third barrier, which can be significant, is a hesitancy and a lack of commitment on behalf of specifically parents of doing this work,” and, “Getting everyone on board. Right? And, getting that when I say getting everyone on board, it means getting them fully invested in the work, not just in name only.”

Fear and Anxiety. Fear and anxiety were another barrier identified by five participants. Participant K referred to family fear and adopting school-wide equity practices when they stated, “So I think there was always this fear that it would divide us.” Participant I stated:

But it is really hard for people to change things about what they have been doing for a long time, even things that they have not been doing for a very long time, change is tough, so is habit. Fear of being wrong, fear of saying the wrong thing, fear of trying something new. (I)

Fear and social media also appeared, Participant F stated:

I think what's worth mentioning is the fear part for teachers. This is a new one. The role that social media is beginning to play in schools, and in particular, calling out schools or calling out teachers for things that they may do or don't do. And what we're seeing here is a real increase, rather than a decrease in that fear on the part of a lot of teachers. (F)

Participant F went on to conclude that teachers were, "Afraid to bring this up, because I am afraid I am going to say the wrong thing."

Personal Bias and Limitations. Five of the participants discussed personal bias and limitations such as their own lack of exposure as a barrier to achieving diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Participant D acknowledged their own limitations as a barrier, "I think it is as the Head of School, probably my own limitations as a person." Participant F acknowledged all constituencies' limitations through their life's experiences and exposure by stating, "We have all had different blind spots, we have all had different, we all have different things that we need to unlearn." Last, participant A depicted student's limitations as a lack of exposure:

I had a student who was late to class. Why were you late? I was windsurfing over the weekend. Yeah? So, in Maui, oh, my dad invented windsurfing. You know, and you are thinking, okay, I am in a different world. Their idea of diversity is that they talk to their maid and so I came to the conclusion, the students I had before that were all in hot lunch programs, you know, they were really limited because of the lack of exposure to other parts of the world. (A)

As participant A continued to discuss a lack of exposure it began to shed light on their privilege as a limitation in their community as a barrier:

So, I was trying to figure out how to bring them exposure and I realized that, this was the real issue, is how they saw no change and did not need to change. You know, they signed up and paid tuition because they wanted their kids surrounded by other kids like that. (A)

Participant K also identified privilege at their school as a barrier to school-wide equity practices designed to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence by stating:

I think that is particularly challenging in a private school, where many of them have a history of really sort of being bastions of power and privilege, and where young people are prepared to have the baton of power and privilege passed to them. (K)

Participant K's quote represented a widely held perception held by the community, which is a direct segue to the next level two category.

Community Perception

Community perception was the general perception of families and the community both inside and outside of independent schools and how it could have been a hindrance to achieving diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Community perception appeared in ten of the participant's transcripts in three ways: general community perception; assumptions; and general attitudes and exhaustion.

General Community Perception. Nine of the 11 participants referred to community perception as a barrier. The most notable perception stated by the participants was that of independent and private schools reflected by Participant J, "What normally happens in private schools across the country, which is to be an, you know, training ground for the elite." Participant G shared what it may take to overcome the privileged community perception, "If we really want to achieve this, we could close our doors and give our endowments away, because, you know, these schools are built on privilege, right?" Participant C expressed the same notion:

That exists, an elitist institution that was founded on exclusion is now trying to be inclusive. Like, that is a complicated thing. So, we just became real about that. And I think that plays into all of that, you know, people have preconceived notions. (C)

Participant F also detailed how significant community perception is:

So, the founding mission was adopted, because the founder of the school, who was a product of a very, very traditional independent school, realized that a school like that was more about restricting access, only, it was all about privilege and not about access and so he felt strongly that all kids deserve the kind of education that he had, and wanted to create an independent school that was accessible, not a gatekeeper. (F)

School F made a conscious decision of where to build their campus because of the general community perception: “As the founders talked about it, they did not want to be the private school on the hill behind the gate, they wanted to be a school, in and among the community.”

Participant K summed up community perception as a whole for independent schools and its role as a barrier toward more diversity, inclusion and cultural competence:

Private schools in particular, I think they like things to be orderly and neat and polite. And I think the industrial model of education is based on conformity, efficiency, and control. And I think conflict, which is to me fundamental to the work, really flies in the face of that desire, for perfect order and for everything to be in its place. (K)

General Attitudes and Exhaustion. Other general attitudes appeared in five of the participants’ transcripts as barriers to achieving diversity inclusion and cultural competence.

Participant D mentioned feeling insecure, “It leaves us feeling sometimes incompetent in some places, and nobody is going to go that to that place unless they feel secure in the environment that they are in.” Participant E described faculties exhaustion as a barrier, “In particular, teachers are very exhausted. Why are we continuing to do this work this year, when we are just trying to get through the year? But you cannot sort of separate the pandemic, from equity and inclusion.”

Participant I described how family attitudes in independent schools have been a barrier for decades:

The much trickier part is current families that start to get dissolution, and how do you negotiate that. That is a huge barrier, and it often prevents, in a lot of ways for decades, it has prevented school leaders from actually talking about any of these issues, let alone dealing with them, structurally, because we need to be able to fund our schools. (I)

Assumptions. Two participants described assumptions and their role with progress. First, Participant F stated how assumptions prevent progress, “And if you make assumptions about where people are, that will undermine the good work you are trying to do,” Secondly, Participant F described how assumptions intertwined with communications can be a barriers to progress, “So

assumptions were made and I think that while social media may not be the best way to, I do not think social media is the best way to do that kind of communication.”

Lack of Resources and Geographics

Lack of resources and geographics were the lack of abundant financial resources, time, people resources, and location and how they played a barrier to achieving diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Lack of resources and geographics appeared in ten participants’ transcripts through four manners: a lack of financial resources; enrollment and hiring headwinds, geographic location, and time. Ten out of the 11 participants described lack of resources and geographics as a barrier to achieving diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence.

Lack of Financial Resources. A lack of funding was described by nine out of the 11 participants. Participants described that they continue to increase financial aid to assist the insurmountable costs of independent schools for families, but participant G offered her opinion to that, “You know, we keep increasing financial aid. I do not think that is the answer.”

Participant J summed up lack of financial resources by stating:

You know, financial barriers, I suppose. You know, you always want to do more. You always want to be able to offer more, bring more people and give kids more opportunities. We are extremely generous with our budget in this area, but we can always use more money to do that. You know, we have a lot of money here, but it is not unlimited. (J)

Hiring and Enrollment Headwinds. Six of the 11 participants also described attracting and retaining students and faculty of color as a barrier to achieving diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence in their schools.

Hiring Headwinds. Participant B stated, “An inadequate supply, and that sounds a little bit, that is not the right word, but specifically of teachers, identified teachers of color in the Independent School market is a potential barrier.” Participant J described attracting black faculty

as a barrier, “That remains a challenge for us. And we want that to not be a challenge.”

Participant I asserted that needs to change, “Part of what needs to change is this idea of well, you know, no students of color apply, or no people of color apply to our teaching positions.”

Participant F also identified hiring bi-poc faculty as a barrier:

I think the number one issue for us was hiring faculty, not just training faculty, but actually hiring more bi-poc faculty members. Because if the kids cannot see people who look like them, they do not, you know, they cannot identify. (F)

Enrollment Headwinds. Five participants described enrollment as a barrier. The most common was attracting and retaining students of color. Participant C shared even though they have plenty of financing, enrollment is still problematic:

We have more money than we can give, and this makes a weird dynamic. A barrier is the number of applications that we receive for students with financial assistance is low. The number of students applying there’s their families of color and in underrepresented categories is low. (C)

Participant C concluded the difficulty of enrollment at independent schools and their limited spaces for students, “All things being considered, we determine what are the students that we want to admit, and usually, that is about three times as many students as we have space for.”

Geographic Location. The geographic location played an important role in five participant’s enrollment and retention of constituencies through ease of transport and the schools physical location. Participant J stated, “In Los Angeles, because of transportation, to find as many students who are able to get here without, without a lot of subsidized transportation?” In regard to physical location, both Participants G stated, “We are not moving the school anytime soon.” Participant C then described their physical location in more detail:

You know, like, here we are up in the hills of Los Angeles, but the geography piece is really a challenge, right. And so, and the affordability, and, and all that of, for not only families, but also for educators. And so, thinking about some structural changes to ensure that educators can afford to live within the proximity of our school, and the transportation is not a factor. (C)

Time. Time was the last barrier that appeared in four participants' transcripts. Participant F described how long it took to see the fruits of their fundraising labors, "But it takes a very, very long time to raise endowment funds, before you start seeing the kind of impact that endowment can have." Participant E described how if you adopt something, then something else needs to be given up, "Time is, of course, a barrier, because if you add something to people's plates, then you have to give something up."

Direct and Defiant Resistance to Change

Direct and defiant resistance to change was the complete unwillingness to change behaviors for the institutional vision and philosophy of an equitable community. Eight participants described direct and defiant resistance at their schools through direct resistance as well as prejudice and home life resistance.

Direct Resistance. Seven out of the 11 participants described some sort of direct resistance from community members towards the school's mission to achieve more diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. The predominant constituency group suggested by the participants displaying direct and defiant resistance to change was the parents. Both Participants E and F referred to, "Backlash from the parents," and "parent resistance," as a barrier. Participant E suggested that there was backlash from parents because, "this sort of emphasis on talking about race is very uncomfortable and sometimes they are resistant." Participant D corroborated the same notion when they stated, "And we have some families that feel like you are brainwashing, and you are telling. No, we are not brainwashing, we are just asking different questions that you never got asked when you were a kid." The most notable defiance was identified by the one participant that outwardly addressed their self as a person of color, Participant H:

So I was called anti American. I stopped the pledge and then I was called lots of other things because I, the euphemism of progressive was a way of talking about my race and ethnicity without saying it, that is how they referred to me as progressive. But they, it was all wrapped into, you just transfer the words, and I knew what they were trying to tell me. So they were not used to a Head of school that was not white. (H)

Prejudice and Home Life Barriers. Five participants mentioned prejudice and home life as school-wide equity practice barriers. Participant A mentioned how prejudice was a barrier to achieving diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence, “I think the barriers have been people’s natural prejudice and assumptions about others.” Participant A followed that up by stating, “Yeah, so I think the other issue you always face is resistance to change. You know, they are people who are happy with the status quo, are thinking, why do we need to change?” Participant E described home life versus school life resistance to change by stating, “They have often raised their children as being colorblind, they themselves feel that that is a more that is a more inclusive way.”

Two participants offered their summary of direct resistance to change barriers. Participant A stated, “So I do think that when it comes to resistance, it is always going to be there, you need to be aware of it.” Participant I offered theirs:

Because, you know, antagonism, I learned this in the classroom. And it is a good lesson to bring into leadership, antagonists, antagonism is easier to work with. A lot easier to work with than apathy. So, I would much rather have a whole contingent of faculty and staff who outwardly and explicitly disagree, because that gives us something to talk about. It is lack of engagement and apathy that I think is a bigger problem. (I)

Strategies to Overcome Barriers to School-wide Equity Practices

Strategies to overcome were the potential school-wide equity practices participants offered as part of their approach to address the unsolved barriers. Ten out of the 11 participants offered strategies to overcome the barriers that persist at their school. The participants described many ways to overcome barriers such as increasing funding and reflection, but the most

predominantly appearing level one categories were through: increasing education and understanding; building relationship and trust; and engaging constituencies in dialogue.

Increasing Education and Understanding. The most predominantly appearing strategy to overcome barriers was through increased education and understanding. Two participants, I and F, noted that improving clarity of communications and transparency could potentially assist in overcoming barriers. Participant F shared necessary education from parent backlash, “A parent raised her hand and said, it is not that we do not trust you. We do not have the tools to deal with these issues.” Participant B already described parent education as a strategy to overcome barriers by stating they will be “implementing various education programs to educate the entire community.” Participant A stated how the importance of diversity must be understood by everyone, “So it is just realizing how to try to help get everyone to understand a more diverse student body is going to help everyone.” Helping everyone realize included the students, as participant A stated:

How do I help educate them about the importance of our students, knowing they are going to go to college, it is a much more diverse, economically diverse environment, and realizing that they are that sheltered, just around wealthy people, how that handicaps them? (A)

Participant F depicted necessary teacher education as a strategy to overcome barriers:

We have to do a better job of training them and training them may mean role playing and putting them in situations where they get to practice these skills. How do we give teachers the opportunity to practice this work and make mistakes so that they are not confronted with it in the classroom where the stakes may be a little higher? (F)

Building Relationships and Trust. The second main strategy to overcome barriers encountered by participants was through relationships and building trust. Participant A explicitly said, “I think that part of the issue is, in creating a diverse community, is that sense of trust,” and

that they needed the right relationships at the school to, “close down the barriers.” Participant E stated their continual work with their trust expert would be transformative moving forward:

We wanted to work directly with a consultant, to have a long term, long term relationship with somebody who our community can come to know and trust, to help us deepen the work. So, it is not just a one off or bringing, you know, we also bring other voices in, to give other perspectives or to compliment the work that he is doing. But certainly, having that trusted expert who has brought everyone along, has been transformative. (E)

Participant I referred to their vulnerability and transparency to build more trust:

A really important leadership behavior is transparency regarding these issues. But there is a limit because there are some things you cannot talk about. The mistake comes in, when as Head of School, and I have made this mistake, when you are not as transparent as you could be. So, my operating rule right now, for the last couple years, it has been, I will be as transparent as my conscience and the law will allow me to be. Anything less than that is going to build up and add up over time and it will not produce trust. Right? And like I said earlier, trust begets trust, and vulnerability begets vulnerability. (I)

Engaging Constituents in Dialogue. The last predominant strategy to overcome barriers offered by participants was engaging dialogue with all constituents. Participant D simply stated they were overcoming, “through ongoing education, sometimes these are programs and sometimes these are individual conversations.” Participant I discussed that misalignment was a huge barrier for them and their following response was how to effectively overcome that barrier:

The only way to effectively deal with that misalignment without it getting worse or becoming a real problem is individual, one on one, or one on two conversations. It has to be a human-to-human interaction or set of interactions, where you reframe the conversation from the start. Otherwise, it is doomed from the start. It is absolutely exhausting, and absolutely critical. (I)

Lastly, Participant K already explained that the human-to-human interactions and conversations that occur were to help constituencies realize their gain, not their loss in achieving DEI: The last 2 themes related to research question 3 and focused on necessary leadership behaviors to lead school-wide equity practices.

Theme 6: Necessary Leadership Behaviors

Necessary leadership behaviors are any quality, trait, characteristic, attribute, or specific action deemed necessary to lead independent schools in achieving more diversity, inclusion and cultural competence by the Head of school. The four main leadership behaviors that participants described as necessary to lead independent schools in achieving diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence were: having to believe in the DEI work; empowering, developing and supporting others; a strong emotional intelligence; and transformational leadership behaviors. Table 9 depicts the necessary leadership behavior's theme and its corresponding categories.

Table 9

Necessary Leadership Behaviors Theme & Categories

Level 1 Categories	Level 2 Categories	Theme
Focus on Learning & Making a Difference	Having to Believe in The DEI Work	(6) Necessary Leadership Behaviors
Data Driven Practices		
Self-involved		
Personal Belief in The Work		
Growth Mindset		
Shared Leadership - Personal Ownership & a Willingness to Share	Empower, Develop & Support OTHERS	
Challenge & Develop Others		
Accountability		
Self-awareness, Motivation, Social Skills, Empathy, Self-regulation	Strong Emotional Intelligence	
Idealized Influence, Individual Consideration, Intellectual Stimulation, Inspirational Motivation	Transformational Leadership Behaviors	

Believe in the DEI Work

All participants referred to having to believe in educational equity and having aligned personal values, beliefs, and mindset if their schools are to truly achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Participant's transcripts generated believing in the DEI work through five manners: focusing on learning and making a difference; leading with data driven practices; being self-involved; personal belief in the work; and having a growth mindset.

Focus on Learning and Making a Difference. All 11 participants alluded that student learning was the number one priority and that as a leader you must focus on learning and making a difference. Participant E highlighted students' best interest, "Hoping to do what I know is right, and what is in the best interest of the school and the students at the school." Participant D and Participant F respectively stated, "We want students and the adults to begin to see where they can make a difference," and, "providing them an opportunity to be better people."

Participant I summed up his own leadership belief on doing what is right for students:

Most of us who are in our 30s, or 40s, remember walking into a classroom and as soon as we crossed that threshold into the classroom, we took our internal locus of control, and we handed it over to the teacher and we sat nice and obedient, ready to do what we were told, and to raise our hand and get the right answer. Well, that is no longer adequate. And what it is producing is not the kind of students and not the kind of world that we want. So we are going to change it. (I)

Data Driven Practices. Eight of the participants referred to data driven practices as necessary for leaders to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Participant B referred to data driven practices to measure their success, "We needed to provide and get some baseline data to help address that question about how do we know that we are achieving success?" Participant H stated that data driven practices was a personal area of growth, "Looking at surveys, looking at kinds of collecting data in that way, is something that we have done very informally, but not systematically. And so that is the place where I would like to do more work."

Participant K referred to providing teachers with the most up to date best practices, “We also focus on achieving a baseline cultural competency for all our teachers and helping them become even more intentional about facilitating culturally responsive classrooms.” Participant K also offered one of his responsibilities:

School K is a school that did everything pretty much intuitively and then the research caught up to it and they said, oh, wow, you were doing it right all along. I think what has happened is that we had to figure out why the school worked, and so, largely my job has been about sort of saying, what is the magic in the mess? Like, how does this magic actually work? We have almost worked backwards from experience of what the school has discovered along its journey, and now trying to codify it. (K)

Self-involved. Six of the 11 participants described their self-involvement of the diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence efforts at their school as necessary. Participant K specifically spoke about their history as a past diversity practitioner and “understanding the nature of the work,” which enabled them to “lead the conversation.” Participant J also mentioned their self-involvement as a Head of school:

The only other thing I did not mention is just showing up and being in the middle of it, and not being afraid of those moments where you are going to hear stuff, going to make you feel bad. I think that is probably number one. Heads that I know who have not done well in this kind of work, are the ones that run away from it, hide, do not participate, or shut down the conversation. The ones that do well, are the ones that are actively in the middle of it. (J)

Personal Belief in The Work. Five participants described that it was a necessary behavior to personally believe in this work to achieve equity at their school. Participant E touched upon their belief and their belief in others:

Knowing how important that work is, it just fortifies me, and it also helps me to not feel bad for expecting other people to be on their journey. You know, they don’t have to be where I am, but I really do expect people to be on a journey if they want to be at this school. (E)

Participants D and H explicitly stated you have to believe in it, respectively, “Whatever you are trying to do has to be something that you really believe in,” and, “I think you have to be honestly

you have to believe in racial equity and justice in order to do the work as a leader. You have to believe it.” Even in the face of resistance, Participant B stated, “Despite the resistance from parts of the population that do not necessarily always believe in this work, that one would face a commitment to the work.” Participant D stated how the fortitude must come from within:

It has got to be something that really comes from a deep place, otherwise, you are not going to put up with it, two things will happen. One is any kind of negative feedback, you will shy away from it, or you just go for the next thing that happens in education, you know, what is the next shiny object we jump to your attention to? Because this requires just a steady focus on it, you just have to stick with it. (D)

Growth Mindset. Two of the participants explicitly discuss having a growth mindset as a valuable leadership behavior. Participant J described a growth mindset as one of the attributes they asked faculty to be evaluated on. Participant B stated that independent leaders looking to lead independent school-wide equity practices must have, “A willingness to be growth minded is a, I guess a better way to frame kind of, so being growth minded with regards to this, this work and the education that goes into it.”

Empowering, Developing, and Supporting Others

Empowering, developing, and supporting others were empowering constituencies with opportunities with a higher capacity for change and supporting others in their developing journey of learning. Empowering, developing, and supporting others appeared in all participants’ transcripts in four ways, through: shared leadership, personal ownership, and a willingness to share; challenging and developing others; and accountability.

Shared Leadership, Personal Ownership, and a Willingness to Share. Allowing others to take personal ownership appeared in the transcripts seven times and a willingness to share leadership appeared eight times. For personal ownership, Participant C stated that as a leader, “You need you need everyone to see it as a responsibility that they have personal

ownership over.” Participant H gave faculty and staff the lead in training, “Because we want to make sure that folks are entering where they are comfortable.” Participant J concluded, “I think it is really important, ensuring that people who have interest and passion for the work, have agency to do the work so that there can be a sense of ownership and belonging.”

Participant C specifically described a, “Willingness to distribute the leadership amongst the key other leaders,” as a necessary leadership behavior. Participant E also described their willingness to share leadership, “I think it is important to augment other voices and not be the expert. I am somebody who believes in shared leadership, which I think is important for this kind of work.” Participant A stated their distributed leadership style was beneficial for faculty, “To take a step back and give others the ability to really take off.” Participant H referred their willingness to share leadership results in beautiful outcomes:

I’m leaning heavily now on the social justice group, because I feel strongly that they are meeting the need in the moment. So, there has been this beautiful kind of conversion of me working one on one with folks to working with the full faculty. And then for them to also be listening and getting information from children. (H)

Challenging and Developing Others. Six out of the 11 participants suggested challenging and developing others as a necessary leadership behavior. Participant D challenged their faculty to find unique ways to diversify their curriculum. Participants developed others to foster growth, “My style has always been to be honest, but also be provocative with my faculty and staff to ask questions that may initially make them slightly uncomfortable, but also in a way that is intended to help them grow.” Participant K also stated how empowering, developing, and supporting others allows for growth:

It is not necessarily where people are on that journey, it is that they are on the journey, and that they are trying to grow. And so, I think that I have found that those leadership behaviors allow that growth to occur near almost everybody I have ever encountered. (K)

Participant K concluded with challenging their students is just part of their culture:

Our culture is one where kids are generally very respectful, they are willing to hold space and witness the evolution of that person's consciousness as they describe it. And so those stories, we tend to be a school that is both heart at heart and head. Basically, we want the kids to tell their stories, but we also want them to be grounded in history, grounded in statistics, but it cannot be all of that by itself, it cannot be an abstraction. They have to be able to appeal to the heart and the head. (K)

Accountability. Accountability was referred to by five of the participants. Participant H stated how they were holding their constituencies accountable to the mission and that, "Does not mean that we do not have pitfalls in places, where we say the wrong thing and do, but we hold each other accountable." Participant C explicitly stated one of her responsibilities as a leader was, "accountability and holding people accountable to those goals and metrics that you are setting." Although they are no longer present, Participant J, reflected how important accountability was in developing others even long after leaders were gone:

So, the founders had a deep interest in making sure that that did happen and actually, the endowment has rules around it, around the kinds of kids we have here, you know, the amount of aid we are giving out, and all that is, is for us to be held accountable. (J)

A Strong Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EQ) was the ability to perceive emotions, access and generate emotions to assist thought, comprehend emotions and emotional knowledge, and reflectively regulate emotions that guide emotional and intellectual growth. The five ways EQ appeared in all participants' transcripts were the same as Goleman's (1995) five characteristics of EQ: self-awareness, social skills, motivation, empathy, and self-regulation.

Self-awareness. Ten participants described their own self-awareness as a leadership behavior necessary for leading independent school-wide equity practices.

Personal Self-awareness. Seven participants referred to their own personal awareness. Participant I stated that independent school leaders must be aware of themselves to achieve

success, “The success of any intervention relies upon the interior condition of the intervener.”

Participant H described how important it was for school leaders to start with themselves:

I think people need to understand where they fall honestly, in this work, before they delve into it, because I think the greatest barrier to my colleagues sometimes is not having that reflective lens, and they do really good work, but do not fully understand how important it is for them to start with themselves. (H)

Participant H also stated why it is necessary for leaders to be self-aware:

It is necessary because it can be difficult to understand where to take your school, if you are truly not comfortable with the initiatives, it is going to be hard for you to lead them in that direction, even if that is what is expected of you. And how it goes back to being honest with yourself. (H)

Self-education. Six participants described being self-aware through their own education.

Participants were part of white anti-racist affinity groups, multiracial groups, and were on the anti-racist task force for CAIS. Participant’s J and F portrayed the self-educating behavior:

The idea that I am a learner too, and I have a lot that I don’t know, and acknowledging what I look like managing how I move through the world. And being clear about that, and to own that, you cannot do the work unless you do the work yourself and you cannot do the work in the school necessarily, unless you are personally invested in it. (J)

Participant F stated:

I think the last one is your own education, training, and practice, right? I need to do this work as well. And so, I need to be willing to roll up my sleeves, do the work, and learn as much as I can. And learn from other schools and learn and be willing to reach out and see what other best practices are happening in other schools. (F)

Motivation. Ten of the participants identified motivation as a leadership behavior necessary for leading independent school-wide equity practices.

Being Vulnerable. Seven of the participants described their vulnerability to increase motivation. School Heads portrayed a story where constituencies were always looking to the leader for guidance, and participant D depicted how their motivation through vulnerability can affect change:

I just think people are always looking to the leaders in any school for direction to go in and the confidence to do that. And that means as a leader, you have to both be competent in what you are doing and vulnerable at the same time. (D)

Participant E also aimed to motivate their constituencies by being vulnerable, acknowledging limitations, and owning them, “I also think being kind of, not vulnerable in like a sappy way, but acknowledging, I’m white, like I am a white school leader, and I am doing this work.”

Participant C described motivation as necessary to lead slightly different:

I think I will go with humility and vulnerability, like, being willing to sort of model that and say, I do not have it all figured out, and, you know, be willing to not necessarily get it right the first time and or feel like, you have to aim for perfection. I think it is progress, not just perfection. (C)

Questioning Techniques. Six participants’ transcripts displayed questioning as a motivating technique for constituencies, operationally defined as situational awareness questioning. Participants used situational awareness questioning to motivate the community.

Participant I described their situational awareness questioning:

Another thing that I have learned, it has come in very handy. I wish I had learned it a long time ago. I am much less concerned these days with having answers to people’s questions and I am much more interested in asking better and better questions. And recognizing that we have to answer these questions together. (I)

Questions such as, “So it was not a question of what are you giving up? What? Why are you giving up this book, but more so, look at how this book is enriching your child? So, what does this tradition look like? And how do we make it an equitable one,” by Participant G, supporting Participant I’s previous leadership behavior of asking questions.

Social Skills. Ten participants identified EQ social skills as a necessary leadership behavior for leading independent school-wide equity practices. EQ social skills appeared in the participants’ transcripts four ways, through: listening; communicating the why; communicating their personal beliefs; and taking accountability for others.

Listening. Nine participants stated that listening was a necessary leadership behavior to lead a school to achieving more diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Participant A stated their responsibility is “to be a good listener and answer questions.” Participant E said:

Being a good listener, being able to communicate my stance as the Head of school and what the school as I said earlier, sort of stands for, and, a non-anxious presence, while listening, so that you can tolerate whatever anybody brings to you. (E)

Participant I suggested that while listening is great, leaders can always do more:

As Head of School, as someone who was doing a lot of listening, it became clear that that we needed to do more, that we could do more, and that it was an opportunity for a school to learn from its students. And I think more, I think schools need to learn from their students a lot more than they actually do. It is not a one-way street. (I)

Participant G urged independent school Heads to, “talk less, listen more, and work harder.”

Communicating The Why. Heads consistently referred to their job as communicating the why school-wide equity practices were adopted. Eight of the 11 participants expressed communicating the why as a necessary leadership behavior for independent school Heads.

Participant A stated his responsibility as a leader was to, “Part of me is having to be a leader. And having to say this is important. This is what we are going to do, here is why we are all going to do it.” Both Participants D and F have made explaining the institutional why a priority.

Participant F stated:

I have tried to make it a priority in every speech that I give to the faculty, student body, or to the panel body that I am including in that speech, not only updates on our DEI work, but reminding people of its importance to School F. (F)

Participant H described how communicating the why was needed regarding culture alignment:

That was something that I immediately used as a case study and presented information on and presented the rationale for indigenous day and why that was important and gave them the history on Columbus Day. So, they understood the air in their ways, but they understood why that no longer was in alignment with who we were as an institution. (H)

Communicating Their Personal Beliefs. Eight participants also described communicating their personal beliefs as a necessary behavior in guiding the community to school-wide equity practices to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. For Participant A, it was rooted in their experience with less fortunate kids:

I have always thought about those kids, amazingly talented kids, and wouldn't it be great if they can have a School A education. So, it was early on realizing, I need to be open about why this is important to me. So, part of being a leader is just explaining the why. This is what is important to me. (A)

Participant H communicated their belief to faculty and staff why it was important:

I think, for our faculty and staff, it is not only just important to me, it is important personally and professionally for all of this, for the faculty and staff to be looking at equity and justice very seriously again, given the context of our country, I do not think we have any other way of handling it. (H)

Lastly, when asked why school-wide practices were adopted, participant C stated, "Why were they adopted? Because I felt strongly about them?"

Taking Accountability for Others. Two participants discussed the importance of taking accountability on behalf of their institution and apologizing for others. For participant A, a black parent reached out when a teacher casted a urchin thief role and gave the role to the parent's child. After speaking and apologizing to the parent, Participant A stated, "So some of it is just you got to have that open dialogue when things come up that you can get to talk through."

Participant I stated although they were not Head of school at the time, it was necessary to take accountability for Heads before their tenure:

Leaders have to admit their mistakes. leaders have to take accountability for things that happened before their tenure because the relationships that alumni have are lifelong. Yes, they exist with specific teachers that they had, and their classmates, but they also have a relationship with the institution that is their alma mater. You might not have been the Head of School when they graduated in 1996 or 1988, but you are the leader of their alma mater now, and it is our responsibility, those of us who are in leadership, especially as Heads to take accountability for the entire past of our institutions. (I)

Empathy. Ten participants identified empathy as a necessary leadership behavior for leading independent school-wide equity practices. Participants expressed empathy in their responses by three ways: knowing their community; listening empathetically, and through compassion. These three empathy characteristics of knowing and listening to more perspectives led to more understanding.

Knowing Their Community. Seven of the participants described knowing their community as a necessary leadership behavior to increase understanding and empathy in the community. Participant F described understanding their community, “Leaders need an understanding of where everyone is, and what do they need? Whether you are a teacher, a parent, or a student, and not assume that everyone is in the same place.” Participant I stated knowing people was statistically more important than tests in regard to setting the stage for equity:

The predictive power of these tests is non-existent when compared to actually getting to know students as part of the admissions process. And so that helps us set the stage for equitable practices in the classroom when students actually enroll at the school. (I)

Participant J tied the leadership behavior of understanding students to the mission of the school:

It is so foundational, the philosophy, you know, connected to the mission is always about and always begins with who every student is. You can stand up in front of the class and just sort of spout whatever, and it doesn’t matter. We want to make sure that it matters. (J)

Listening Empathetically. Although nine participants referred to listening as a necessary leadership behavior, only five of the participants described listening emphatically. Participant K stated, “I am a big believer in presence. I think that you need to be fully present, to listen empathically, and to listen without judgment.” Participant D also described engagement and active listening, and not just waiting for others to come to them:

You have to intentionally go out of your way to listen to lots of different perspectives and ask about it. It is very easy to get caught into where you are hearing over and over again, from people who agree with you and are wanting to go in the same direction. (D)

Participant D also offered another way to emphatically listen, “Listen, as if you are wrong, so that you hear things in different ways, rather than trying to prove your point, imagine you are wrong, and then hear what people are really saying.”

Compassion. Two participants described having compassion as a necessary leadership behavior to achieve more diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school.

Participant E stated, “I do not think you can be all things to all people. When you do this work, although I think you can have compassion and empathy for lots of different points of view.”

Participant G described how compassion helped them as a school leader more than anything else:

I think compassion, I have always felt that I have based my practicing in compassion, nothing impacted me more than what we have gone through. It has made me a better leader because I am visibly moved by all that people have gone through. I am more interested in supporting families, supporting the grief, supporting the hard times, supporting young people. Having that is exhausting. I mean, it sounds like it, but you are shepherding a large community and making yourself available for every constituency.
(G)

Self-regulation. Six of the participants identified self-regulation as a leadership behavior necessary for leading independent school-wide equity practices. Several participants discuss self-care as a way to regulate themselves. Participant D stated:

You need to know how to take care of yourself. It is really hard work and in an ideal world, you have got people around you that love you, and you love them. And that physically and spiritually, you are taking care of yourself. And I really believe it has to be on a daily basis. It is not just a weekend warrior kind of approach. (D)

Participant E described even if it was short, find time to step away, “I am giving myself a break if I need a break. It is like meditating, right? You continue to come back to the breath, you can continue to come back to that work.” Participant I talked about how self-regulation is critical for leaders and prevents burnout:

It is critical as a leadership behavior to find time, if not every day, definitely, multiple times a week to think, to read and to reflect. That can come in lots of different forms.

You can combine exercising with listening to Audible, getting on my treadmill or going for a walk. (I)

Participant I offered that without the critical leadership behavior of self-regulation, “Burnout is right around the corner.”

Transformational Leadership Behaviors

Transformational leadership behaviors were demonstrated by independent school leaders that maintained a social justice moral purpose while striving for equity excellence with students from all backgrounds and perspectives. Leaders must have exhibited courageous and authentic leadership seeking to transform culture by improving relationships, of course, always led with their moral purpose and integrity. The four ways transformational leadership appeared in the participants’ transcripts were the same as Bass’s (1985) four dynamic characteristics of the leader-follower dyad: idealized influence, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation.

Idealized Influence (Charisma). Idealized influence was how the followers viewed the school leader’s charisma to bolster consensus and commitment toward organizational goals and developing school-wide equity practices through enhanced participation to achieve increased diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Idealized influence appeared in all participants’ transcripts in three ways: explicitly declaring equity goals, charisma and through storytelling.

Explicitly Declaring Equity Goals. Seven participants suggested declaring equity goals were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence and making that public was another way that participants displayed idealized influence. Participant E stated:

We wanted a diverse and inclusive environment, because it improved learning outcomes for all students, and we wanted to focus on equity and inclusion in hiring, and enrollment practices, leadership governance, so in terms of structure, it was structured into the strategic plan, and we made it public in terms of our goals. (E)

Participant I, who was the most explicit and outwardly vocal with their community on their philosophy, stated explicit vocal alignment was the number one priority:

Number one thing is explicit vocal alignment from the Board to the Head of School, through the leadership team. And every aspect of the school that DEI, equity, and social justice work and becoming an anti-racist institution, is a priority. (I)

Participant I went on to mention that there was real tension when there is explicit equity goals to the public, but leaders must have remained steadfast:

These are real, we are responsible for the employment of all of these individuals and there is a real tension between being explicit and doing this work and maintaining the financial viability of the school. It is up to school Heads, Boards, and leadership teams to have the moral courage to make the right decisions and to be prudent and clear. (I)

Charisma. Seven of the 11 participants suggested through their descriptions that charisma was a necessary leadership behavior to enhance the desired environment. Participant I described charisma through honest vulnerability:

Honest reflection and outward vulnerability with your community, students, parents, faculty, and staff is the only way through that because that is what builds trust. And trust begets trust, and a lack of vulnerability, a lack of candor about the past will prevent positive outcomes. Even if you do all the things, we have been talking about. It will just be performative. It will look good. It will sound good, but it will not get to the core of what is really going on. (I)

Participant G stated that, “Having a sense of humor and you know, not over apologizing and admitting when we’ve missed stepped,” are necessary charismatic behaviors to lead with.

Participant D referred to charisma through their learning, understanding, and asking better questions:

As I lead the school, I also need to be one of the leading learners and understand more of the equity inclusion work we do from different vantage points and being well versed in it so that when I listen to people, I can ask better questions. It is not about being able to lecture or things like that, it is being able to understand things in a more nuanced way to be able to ask better questions. (D)

Participant C referred to charisma through, “Excellent communication skills is important, being able to tie, mission and purpose, or values to the work, and really articulating that to whatever constituent group needs to know, I think in terms of leadership.” Participant A stated the necessary change they sought needed to be done through persuasion:

So, I think you just have to be honest with yourself, what am I trying to accomplish? I am trying to shape culture, how do I do it? And realize you cannot do it through rules. You need to do it through persuasion. (A)

Storytelling. Two participants referred to storytelling as a leadership behavior they have adopted to reinforce their commitments and gain followership. Participant A stated, “I would tell stories about the kids that I taught before, and what I cared about. I talked about my other experiences in high school and college that really reinforced my commitment to diversity.” Participant H shared that at their school, “We emphasize story as a way of comfortably beginning the conversation around race.” Participant H practiced what they preached by sharing to increase engagement:

And I shared openly about my identity, racial and ethnicity. And that also became a point of connection. So, we ended up sharing a lot of stories. So, in the salons, initially, parents were sharing their own stories around things that they have encountered. (H)

Individualized Consideration. Individualized consideration was showing humility and paying attention to constituencies’ needs to promote educational equity in transforming school culture. Individualized consideration also included an openness and sensitivity to multiple perspectives. All participants that described individualized consideration in their transcripts displayed; humility; meeting people where they are at; expressing gratitude; and openness.

Humility. Six participants described their humility as a necessary behavior in being sensitive to others and acknowledging they did not have all the answers. Participant D stated:

I think it takes a lot of humility, because both because you really do not know people’s experience. And even though I am well intentioned, I am going to step in it and do things

wrong, and I need to be prepared for people to give me that feedback to help correct it. So, the next time I do better. (D)

Participant G acknowledged their limitations but also understood how humility helped promote the desirable equity culture:

I have to admit that I have to have enough humility, to admit I do not have the answers. I am on this journey with everyone else, and I am making mistakes. I cannot just falter and throw up my hands. I have to have people believe that I am going to lead us out of the wilderness. (G)

Meeting People Where They Are at. Meeting people where they were and paying attention to their needs was another leadership behavior five participants expressed indicating individualized consideration. Participant H stated, “It is just crucial that people kind of see where they are in order to lead.” Participant F stated:

The other thing that that leaders need is an understanding of where everyone is, and what they need? Whether you are a teacher, parent, or a student, and not assume that everyone is in the same place and everyone is ready to move to the next step, whatever that next step looks like, right? Meeting people where they are. (F)

Participant K suggested meeting people where they were was necessary to help others growth:

I think that in that way, I think it allows you to meet people where they are, and to be able to encourage, what is a desirable level of challenge for each of them? You can be differentiated and look at people in their growth continuum. (K)

Expressing Gratitude. Four participants expressed gratitude as a necessary leadership behavior that considered individualized consideration, however, one of those participants, Participant I, described openness and gratitude together. Participant I stated:

I feel incredibly grateful and lucky to be at a school where there is kind of a pretty remarkable openness to change. We are not completely in every nook and crevice, but that is never going to, that would be a unicorn school. (I)

Openness. Three of the participants also referred to their openness as a critical leadership behavior to lead independent school-wide equity practices designed to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Participant K expressed:

I think humility is a big part of like, knowing that I do not know everything, and I do not hold the truth. And that I am open to being a teacher, and I am open to learning in the same relationship. (K)

Participant J also spoke about openness and those solutions can come from others:

In order to really promote the work and to do the work, your view about the end point cannot be so rooted in your own specific experience. So, the humility, the openness, the idea that you are not the final answer, that other people may be able to participate and create a solution to a problem that you don't even necessarily know exists, is really critical. (J)

Intellectual Stimulation. Intellectual stimulation was when leaders role modeled organizational values and behaviors and developed followers through intellectual stimulation to achieve organizational goals, such as equity. A school leader that demonstrated intellectual stimulation encouraged critical thinking and problem solving geared toward institutional goals and abandoned outdated strategies that hindered them. All participants displayed intellectual stimulation in their transcripts two ways: through creative problem solving; and by modeling expected behaviors

Creative Problem Solving. Nine participants discussed creative problem solving as part of their leadership repertoire. For Participant C it was regarding teacher affordability in their community:

With our retention of our faculty, something like a shared mortgage program where we are investing in our faculty long term and can make living more affordable when you think about sort of that equity, right? If the structures do not exist and salaries just cannot keep up at that same rate. So, you really have to think about other things. (C)

Participant F talked about adopting some sort of parent education program to enforce those who lacked an equity commitment through their summer diversity institute, in which they already provided a, "three day deep dive in DEI work," for all their faculty and staff. Participant B stated they created programs as a result of their, "Inequity in access to particular courses, and

particularly the highest-level courses for students who identify as students of color.” Participant A discussed Prefect, the creatively solved popularity contest at their school:

Our student leadership used to be elected and the problem was, it became just a popularity contest. So, then we have something called Prefect, which are half elected, and half selected by the faculty. But the idea is having people whose role is to help create a dialogue between faculty, administrators, and students. (A)

Participant C summed up the importance of creative problem solving regarding necessary leadership attributes, “In terms of leadership, I think it is creative problem solving, because it is not like it is obvious, if it were, we would already be there.”

Modeling Expected Behaviors. Seven participants expressed intellectual stimulation through modeling expected behaviors as a necessary leadership behavior. Participant I explained why modeling expected leadership behaviors was necessary to produce the kind of equitable behaviors in the school environment:

These are the very behaviors you want to see across the board in your community, and you have to be able to cultivate them in your own life and your own practice as a leader, if you want and to be able to articulate that explicitly and to put it, not on display in a look at me kind of way, but on display in a lead by example, kind of way. (I)

Participant G expressed that by modeling courage, “I am encouraging people to really see this as valuable and important work.” Participant I also identified leadership modeling as necessary to maintain a healthy environment:

You are not setting an example for a healthy approach to living and working and being in your community for your leadership team and for your faculty and staff. Employees are not candles that are meant to burn themselves out from both ends. And we need to demonstrate that with how we live our own lives. (I)

Participant I said that leading in this kind of way is, “necessary because as a Head of school, you know that the community needs to see the Head as a person who is doing the same work that everybody else is doing.”

Inspirational Motivation. Inspirational motivation was the honest, courageous, and passionate dialogue of leaders communicating the mission, vision, philosophy, and equity work being done at their institutions to all constituents. Inspirational leadership required courageous dialogue to tackle educational equity and motivate constituencies to a higher purpose. Every participant displayed inspirational leadership in their transcripts four ways: courageous dialogue and courage; being both firm in one's convictions yet flexible when needed; authentic honesty; and through passion and excitement.

Courageous Dialogue and Courage. Eight participants described courageous dialogue and courage as necessary leadership behaviors to motivate constituencies to a higher purpose. Participant G stated that, "I feel that as a head of school, you have to have courage." Participant F described the need stand up to those who are not supportive:

I think you need to have a clear vision and there needs to be a certain amount of courage and bravery to say we are doing this, and that means standing up to those who may be fearful or not supportive of it. (F)

Participant K described courageous conversations with through questioning:

I asked people, especially those who feel most at home in some of these schools, what are you willing to sacrifice? What are you willing to give up? What kind of discomfort are you willing to tolerate? I think that becomes a barrier, because I think there is one thing for things to sound a certain way abstractly, but to impact your life on a daily basis, and to get beyond the notion that I invited you into my home, I didn't tell you to rearrange the furniture, and to get too comfortable. I don't know how else to explain that. So that is not an easy conversation. (K)

Firm in One's Convictions Yet Flexible. Seven participants described being firm in their convictions but flexible when needed as a necessary behavior and courageous dialogue to motivate constituents. School A's standard allowed Participant A to be firm but flexible:

In using that standard for the school and saying, look, this is something we have to agree to agree to. And then to the faculty members that undermine it, saying look, this is not negotiable. So, at some points, it is as a leader, it is playing hardball. But it is making

sure that the community has agreed to it, so you are able to say, this is our community shared values. (A)

Participant E described firm in one's convictions yet flexible as "thick skin" and stated they tried to "not take it personally" which, "requires fortitude, a thick skin, the ability to communicate what I am doing to my Board, and to help them understand."

Authentic Honesty. Six of the participants referred to authentic honesty as another leadership behavior necessary for leaders to display. Participant A described authentic honesty through having courage, "One of the things to do you need to have the courage to say, this was a really great idea in like 1990 and it is pointless now." After learning that an alumnus was appalled by their homophobia and gayness conversations at school, Participant A called in that alumni and stated, "Part of it is having those honest dialogues, if you are really trying to promote diversity. So, it is trying to get people in and then trying to close down the barriers." Participant I discussed how authentic honesty has changed over the years, and if leaders did not lead with authentic honesty, they would not last:

It is about being candid and honest. Even when you don't know the answer, the next step is, or what people really want. We used to be in positions where we could just make it up because it was a command-and-control authority structure. I mean you are not going to last more than a year in this role if you approach it in that way. So, I think leaders and not just in schools, but leaders in any institution are being called to really think differently about all of this, and then change our approach. (I)

Passion and Excitement. The last way participants described inspirational motivation was through passion and excitement of the institutional values and personal values. Five participants described excitement as a necessary leadership behavior leaders should display to inspire others. Participant E discussed how they were excited about the new faculty evaluations and incorporated cultural competencies in them for the first time. Participant G stated that they were:

Really excited about the idea of using, really thinking about creativity, how do we spark creativity. We are not thinking about this in a sort of drudgery way, but if we are able to achieve this, we will have a stronger school. (G)

Participant A summed up excitement as a necessary leadership behavior to lead independent school-wide equity practices designed to achieve more diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence with their excitement:

But I am really excited about our commitment to diversity and equity, I hope you are too. If you do not want to go in this direction, it is a free society, go find a school that is going in the direction you want, but we made a commitment to diversity and equity. I am really excited about it, I hope you are too. (A)

Theme 7: Changing a Culture

Changing a culture was the active creation of a school atmosphere conducive to achieving equity within the school community and greater area. Changing a culture recognized the ever growing multicultural, multiracial, diverse world and took action steps toward creating an equitable system for all. Participants described changing a culture as necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion and cultural competence within their schools, community, and greater area in four manners: responding to an evolving world in real time; future actions planned; a supportive learning environment; and through a necessary iterative process. Table 10 depicts the changing a culture theme and its corresponding categories.

Table 10

Changing a Culture Theme and Categories

Level 1 Categories	Level 2 Categories	Theme
Responding to Adverse Incidents	Responding to an Evolving World in Real Time	(7) Changing a Culture
Responding to a Multicultural, Multiracial and Diverse World		
Gathering Feedback, Increasing Awareness & Understanding	Future Actions Planned	
Evaluation & Implementation of Programming		

Level 1 Categories	Level 2 Categories	Theme
Increased Funding		
Communications, Personnel & Structures		
Professional Development & Engagement		
Diligence - Hard, Messy, Tough Work	A Supportive Learning Environment	
A Place to Make Mistakes		
The Board Makes Everything Possible		
Continual Development, Necessary Growth & Moving Forward	It is a Necessary Iterative Process	
Change Systems		
Change Culture - If Not Woven		

Responding to an Evolving World in Real Time

Responding to an evolving world occurred first when participants responded to adverse events in their world and reflected it in their school-wide equity practices. The second half of responding to an evolving world is a DEI focused response to the ever growing multicultural, multiracial, and diverse world and corresponding reflection in their school-wide equity practices.

Responding to Adverse Incidents. Participants described responding to an evolving world in real time to the present time injustice incidents and major pandemic adverse events: present time Black Lives Matter (BLM) injustice incidents; present time covid pandemic adversity; and present time Asian hate injustice incidents.

BLM, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Derek Chauvin. Eight of the participants described BLM, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Derek Chauvin as notable adverse events. Participants offered school-wide roundtables and equity and injustice forums in wake of those events. Both participants D and J offered roundtables and forums for the community in response to support constituencies needs in the moment. Participant J stated:

Over the last year hosted community roundtables, especially in the wake of George Floyd and Breanna Taylor. And we have conducted those throughout the entire year, once a month, and have invited both alums and also parents and students in different forums to participate in an ongoing conversation, promoting Equity and Inclusion justice. (J)

Participant K described their response was to enhance critical conversations:

Well, this one may straddle the fence because we created this critical conversations piece, which really was created for our school in the midst of George Floyd. And it was really to have our community engage in critical conversations around race through various perspectives, and lenses, in order for them to gain insights to, to effect change within their own lives. (K)

Pandemic Incidents. Five of the participants described the COVID pandemic as a notable adverse event. Participants referred to making mindful decisions because of the pandemic, both with patience and fundraising events. Participant D described how the pandemic forced people to look at how quickly they made decisions:

You have to know yourself well enough, there is the reality of decision fatigue, which we really experienced with the pandemic and you have to know when you are approaching it and saying, I know you need a decision now, and whatever decision we make is not going to be a good one. So let us sleep on it. Let us come back in the morning, we are both fresh and think about how to do a better job with this. (D)

Participant E shared their targeted financial assistance to increase funds for those in need:

Especially in the last year with the pandemic, when so many people were negatively affected by job loss, job hiatus or layoffs or whatever. We targeted specific donors and did targeted giving days where that money was allocated toward sort of emergency tuition assistance, and we definitely saw more need for families. (E)

Asian Hate Incidents. Two of the participants described the Asian hate incidents as notable adverse events. Participants offered updated Asian historical significance and increased training in wake of those events. Participant H spoke about updating their historical significance that promoted awareness and understanding:

A lot of the anti-Asian kind of hate crimes that have been happening have been really kind of percolating in conversation at our school. So, we have taken things off the plate, and have focused on that within the classroom and then ended up elevating Asian Americans that had historical significance. As an example, they always focused on

women in second grade, in a particular part of the year. This year, they focused on Asian women that had made some significant contributions to our country. So that is what I mean, and that is responding in real time. (H)

Participant E described increased training to help create more understanding of constituencies in their community:

Recently with the racial violence against Asian American Pacific Islanders, we have been doing some work around that that was already in some of the curriculum, but we are embedding it more in training, the faculty, many of whom, did not know about some of the laws and in history around Americans of Asian descent. (E)

Responding to a Multicultural, Multiracial, and Diverse World. Participants

described an ever growing multicultural, multiracial, and diverse world in ten manners: social and emotional learning (SEL), Bi-racial persons of color and persons of color (bi-poc & poc); race and ethnicity; black; Latinx; Asian; LGBTQA+; underrepresented; gender identity; and systemic racism, and their school-wide equity practices in response to meet the needs of those groups.

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). All 11 participants referred to the social and emotional needs of constituent groups, particularly the students. Participants referred to creating identity-based harm protocols, hiring school psychologist and other SEL positions, adopting SEL curriculum, and joining SEL partnerships. Participant D specifically referred to the program they created within their school to provide support and awareness around mental health:

We started this Be-well program, students started it, about taking care of mental health at the school. The first students that started it, their commitment was to make an ongoing organization. So, we have created charter to it and it is now this is the third year where we we've had to be well organization. So, it is the idea is that we want students and the adults to begin to see where they can make a difference. (D)

Participant K stated how they created a director of well-being position for additional support, "We created a position, the Director of Student well-being, which we frame diversity, equity

inclusion in terms of public health issue and in terms of student well-being, and this person will be occupying that role. (K)

Bi-poc and Poc. All 11 participants referred to bi-poc and poc as necessary diverse groups requiring corresponding equitable school-wide practices. Participants mostly referred to attracting and retaining bi-poc and poc students and faculty and updating their practices to do so. There were other participants, such as Participant B, that referred to their partnership with Private School Village to provide advocacy and support to students of color. Participant B described their disproportionately low number of students of color in their accelerated programs and responded in real time to increase equity:

I would also add an additional initiative, creating programming, specifically, kind of a program that is directly targeted at providing educational support for students of color, in particular, Black and Latino students, specifically in the area of math and science, to provide additional support and acceleration so that those students that are not just accepted, and doing the program, but actually provided opportunities to excel in those curricular areas. (B)

Race and Ethnicity. All 11 participants referred to race and ethnicity as necessary diverse groupings that required corresponding equitable school-wide practices. Participants mostly referred to adopting racial and ethnic admission and financial assistance practices. Participant B stated their financial assistance practices were, “adopted specifically to help provide primarily socio-economic diversity, but tangentially racial, and ethnic diversity as well.” Participant E stated how they adapted their admission practices over time to serve different learners, including racial and ethnic:

Our school was kind of down the middle kind of school and that was true for different kinds of learners, different kinds of cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. It sort of did not want to veer too far out of you know, more of a traditional independent school kind of learner. So, I think a combination of certainly having to, after the recession of 2008, families who were looking for independent schools, certainly one of the diversity elements had to do with students who might learn differently who might not be served in

a big public-school classroom. The school had to begin to grapple with that when I came here, so that is one kind of diversity that the school has now more embraced. (E)

Black. Ten participants referred to black constituents that required corresponding equitable school-wide practices. Participants mostly referred to attracting and retaining black students and faculty, as well as support arenas such as affinity groups, as necessary school-wide equity practices. Participant B referred to supporting black students and families through a partnership with Private School Village to “bring black families and black students together to talk about their experience and support. Participant K referred to responding in real time to things that popped up for African American parents:

One of the things that pops up in School K, is managing what happens intentionally and what grows out of the soil. Two things that have grown out of the soil that I remember now, there is a black family forum for the middle school, which emerged, which was really about helping African American parents sort of support their children. (K)

Latinx. Nine participants referred to Latinx constituents that required corresponding equitable school-wide practices. Participants mostly referred to attracting Latinx families, financial assistance for Latinx families, and support as necessary school-wide equity practices. Participant F stated that they were launching a new program as part of their DEI work that would focus on, “outreach and support for the Latinx community.” Participant C described how they were updating their admissions to better serve the Latinx population in Los Angeles:

I think that we have to get really intentional, more intentional about our admission, hiring recruitment practices and stretching outside of the typical methods that independent schools use. Particularly if we want to attract and retain people, whether it is students, families, or employees from historically underrepresented groups, particularly the black population, as well as Latinx. I would say those are the two areas that we are very underrepresented relative to Los Angeles, especially Latinx population relative to Los Angeles. (C)

Asian. Seven participants referred to Asian constituents that required corresponding equitable school-wide practices. Participants mostly referred to school-school wide equity

practices that offered support, such as updated curriculum and provided safe spaces. Participant C talked about their newly launched monthly parent group discussions and identified a month dedicated to crimes against Asian American members of the community. Participant G referred to adopted courses for Asian Americans to honor their heritage in the curriculum:

The Korean course was adopted because we had a constituent, and it was a way of diversifying Asian voices. The Asian students are as diverse as any group, we have Japanese students, Filipino, so many Latinx students, and we had this significant population. So it was a way to honor their heritage, we are part of the city and what we say all the time, “we are of and for Los Angeles,” well, a good way to demonstrate that was to connect with the Korean community. (G)

LGBTQA+. Five of the participants referred to LGBTQA+ constituents that required corresponding equitable school-wide practices. Participants mostly referred to school-wide equity practices such as inclusive curriculum, events, affinity groups, and shared language as necessary to meet the needs of their LGBTQA+ community. One participant shared their old school culture, their corresponding action taken in real time to that event, which provided a more welcoming environment to support LGBTQA+ constituencies:

When I first came to the school it was pretty gay phobic, and it really concerned me. My father was gay, and I thought, no, this is not right. It was just something where I thought, how am I going to change this, and I realized I had to look at the kids and the way in which they acted, I looked at the faculty, we had faculty members who were afraid to come out and let people know they were gay. So, I just had to create that welcoming environment in which those kinds of things could change, and that people really could feel supported. (A)

Underrepresented. Four of the participants referred to underrepresented constituents that required corresponding equitable school-wide practices. Participants mostly referred to attracting underrepresented students and families, as well as providing practices for the marginalized in the community, as necessary school-wide equity practices. Participant F referred to their curriculum updates they made because there were members feeling marginalized and not seen in the

curriculum. Participant E stated they are working on eliminating bias in report cards to better meet the underrepresented groups:

How do you communicate that in a report card in a way, where we are avoiding bias? Often gender bias creeps up, girls are so sweet and helpful, oh you know so and so is sweet. Well, you know, so how do we make sure? How do we make sure that we are reducing, minimizing, eliminating bias around the kinds of expectations that we have for underrepresented groups? (E)

Gender Identity and Gender Orientation. Four of the participants referred to gender identity and gender orientation that required corresponding equitable school-wide practices. Three of the participants talked about bringing in speakers to speak directly to constituencies and provided support for parents and teachers to help support kids. Participant H specifically referred to updating the language in their family handbook to be inclusive and meet the needs of the changing world:

We also want to look at policy, we want to put stronger language within our family handbooks around how children are gendered or not gendered. And so, we are going to revamp and look at our gendered language in all of our communications, which is an overall but that's we are all kind of committed to that, but it is going to take time. (H)

Future Actions Planned

Future actions planned were the tentatively discussed school-wide equity practices that have not yet been fully integrated into the community. All Participants described future actions planned in five manners: gathering feedback, and increasing awareness and understanding; evaluation and implementation of programming; increased funding; communications, personnel, and structures; and through PD and engagement.

Gathering Feedback, Increasing Awareness, and Understanding. Seven of the participants described gathering feedback, as well as increasing awareness and understanding as future actions necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. Participants described strategic plans, equity audits, as well as increasing teachers and parents'

knowledge and comfortability. Participant D referred to their strategic plan with their community-based consultant, “We have contracted out with Damon Williams group, which is a consulting group, and they are working with us this year, and next year to come up with a strategic plan for becoming an anti-racist institution.” Participants E and H stated they will work on helping increase awareness and understanding in constituents. Participant E referred to teachers understanding and comfortability with curriculum:

Yeah, I would say continuing some of the work that we have been talking about to deepen it, to make sure teachers know how to bring it into the classroom and to be more comfortable with the difficult conversations or you know, continuing to incorporate it directly into a curriculum again, so it is not just like oh, it is black history month, or it is diversity Friday or whatever. It is really how to continue to help them to incorporate it. How to help them, as I mentioned, to truly pedagogically not just the content, but the how they teach, just bringing in more voices. (E)

Participant H referred to increasing feedback in a safe way from all constituents:

One of the things that I want to think about and that I want to work with the social justice group around and then eventually with a group of parents in the same vein, is to look at how we can gain information from our constituents in a way that doesn’t make people feel like they have to have the conversation and the full forum. (H)

Evaluation and Implementation of Programming. Six of the participants described evaluation and implementation of programming as future actions necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. Participants stated they will be conducting full reviews of their curriculums and competencies and making necessary adjustments to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Participant C captured the nature of all participants future responses toward program evaluation and implementation:

We are planning to do a full review of our social studies curriculum, which I think will particularly impact some of the curricular areas, from a structural standpoint, you know, taking the C three framework and the Teaching Tolerance standards and really digging into all of those areas of like really thinking about what does it mean terms of identity development, and social justice. (C)

Increased Funding. Six of the participants described increased funding as a future action necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. Participants described increased financial support for students, increasing DEI budget, and capital campaigns. Participant I referred to, “A greater emphasis in fundraising specifically to create scholarships for students of color rather than simply identifying applicants of color as a target of our discount strategy.” Participant K suggested raising a significant endowment for financial aid to have a sustainable financial model was a priority for the future. Participant J discussed their capital campaign which was underway to complete an equitable and accessible kitchen for all:

We are completing a kitchen, which is about food equity. We want to make sure, so part of our kitchen project is to ensure that every single student, no matter what they pay to come here, has access to the same food and that has not been the case. And it will be in August starting. (J)

Communications, Personnel, and Structures. Five of the participants described clearer communications and increased personnel as future actions necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. Participants described more thorough communication, additional roles, and future facilities to their personnel to meet the needs of their diverse constituents. Participant E specifically stated they will be offering, “Better and more thorough communication of what we are doing to the larger community.” Participant I reflected the nature of all participants who are looking to add more personnel, by stating they need to find financing for the new position, “We have been carving out a budget, to hire a full-time director of equity and social justice to report to me, we have an interim shared leadership structure right now.” Participant I described how equity and social justice will guide their future master plan:

I am signing an agreement with an architecture firm to start a masterplan project, and equity, social justice, health, and healing are going to be guiding principles, guiding design principles for the master plan. So, although our campus does not outwardly or explicitly, aside from, rotating posters and things like that explicitly deal with equity and social justice, it will. (I)

PD and Engagement. Four of the participants described PD and engagement as future actions necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence with their constituencies at their school. Participant F described their continued education through their summer diversity institute for faculty and staff:

What we are now looking at currently, is how do we create a 201? A more advanced level now that we have got a critical mass of teachers, faculty and staff members who have gone through that summer diversity institute already, so we are looking at doing that as well. (F)

Participant E offered similar sentiments for parents:

So, more professional development, deepening the work more, and coming to a place where, when we have parent education workshops, sometimes the families who come or the families who already are well informed, and they feel like why are we always coming back to like, anti-racism or diversity, equity, inclusion 101? We are ready to deepen the work. (E)

A Supportive Learning Environment

A supportive learning environment was described by the participants as unconditional support in constituents' DEI learning process. Participants described a supportive learning environment in three manners: acknowledging DEI is hard work; a place to make mistakes; and support from the Board.

Diligence - Hard, Messy, Tough Work. Ten of the participants described diligence and acknowledged that DEI was hard, messy, tough work that required difficult conversations to achieve diversity, inclusion and cultural competence. Participants I and Participant K described the nature of hard, difficult, messy work to the greatest extent. Participant I stated:

Leadership requires more and more, in order to deal with these adaptive changes, to bring people along, to enroll people in a cause requires really hard and uncomfortable work of reflection. Schools are fascinating institutions, because they often have the most progressively minded people, and they produce the most institutionally conservative cultures. Because there is something inherently conservative in the literal sense about teaching, we conserve so that it can be passed on wisdom, knowledge, truth, facts, long,

generational conversations about justice and dignity, and equity and government and all of these things. It is just hard. It is hard to think differently, right. (I)

Participant K identified it is hard work because of the underlying emotions and volatile issues:

You are dealing with emotionally charged and potentially volatile issues that go to the core of people's identity and how they see themselves. Quite often, you are asking them to put on a new pair of glasses where they see the world in ways that are very different than they saw the world before. They are seeing themselves in a different image challenging their notion of who they are. So, I think you are going to have some tension, some conflict, and you are going to have people making mistakes on one another, but it is in that conflict, that growth occurs, I think both for the institution and for the individuals and sometimes it is very painful, but it is where the growth is. (K)

Participant G concluded although being an expert in DEI is important, "I do not think it is as important as just rolling up your sleeves and doing the work."

A Place to Make Mistakes. Nine of the participants described their school as a place to make mistakes to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Participants repeatedly referred to constituents having the agency to express themselves in a way that was non-threatening, that they were allowed to be wrong, without consequence. Participant J described ensuring space for faculty to expand upon their passion in a non-threatening way:

I think it is really important, ensuring that people who have interest and passion for the work have agency to do the work, that there is space for affinity groups within the faculty to talk and think about their experience in a non-threatening, non-risky way. (J)

Participant H described how wonderful it was when constituents could have conversation and were not made wrong, "What I achieved there is that people are able to have the conversation more fluidly, because they are comfortable, and they are allowed to enter and not be made wrong." Participant C referred to understanding identity, systems, and structures even outside of the school and how those things took time, and people needed room for mistakes:

So, being able to recognize that and allow room for people for it to be kind of messy, but also safe, and I think is really important as a leader in order to see everyone embrace it in a way where they will also do the work and move forward, so that they do not feel like they have to be perfect or I cannot make a mistake with the words I say or whatever. It is not conducive, ultimately to the growth that is needed. (C)

The Board Makes Everything Possible. Four of the participants described necessary Board support to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their schools. However, only one participant captured that without Board approval, this work would not have been possible. Participant F stated:

Over the years, the Board has been charged with supporting all of these initiatives that we have undertaken, whether it is in fundraising or making these a priority or implementing into the strategic plan. I cannot and I feel badly that I neglected to mention the Board in all these questions but without the support of the Board, much of what we have done would not have happened and I think it is important to note that. (F)

A Necessary Iterative Process

A necessary iterative process is the continual growth, development and moving forward of both practices and people to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at independent schools. Participants described an iterative process in three manners: through continual development, necessary growth and moving forward; changing systems; and through a change in culture.

Continual Development, Necessary Growth, and Moving Forward. Eleven participants described continual development, necessary growth, and moving forward with their equity practices and constituents to achieve diversity, inclusion and cultural competence at their schools. Participant F described how their community held them responsible in making sure they continued to make DEI a priority:

I also think that the Community expects that of us, our students, faculty, parents, and alumni have been really good about holding our feet to the fire, making sure that this continues to be a priority at the school. And I think the school has done a relatively good job of not only listening but responding to that as it comes up. (F)

Participant A described how schools and leaders needed to constantly evaluate their students, classrooms, and curriculum to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence:

As students change, you have to go back and change your curriculum again. And then when you change curriculum, then say, here are the old-fashioned classrooms, this is not going to work, we need to create some new facilities. So hopefully, it kind of all grows out of this idea of constantly evolving, and adapting to the changing needs, but doing it in a thoughtful way. (A)

Participant D described equity never stops, and they always had to stay on the cutting edge, ultimately for the best interest of students:

I do not think that ever stops, if that stops, then our school is on the decline, it is always got to be something I mean, we have to stay on the cutting edge of what is best for students. I cannot imagine equity and inclusion practices will never be in the best interest of students, it is always going to be in the best interest of students. So, I think the adage you hear is that this work is never done, and along with that is our growth as professionals and individuals is never done either. (D)

Participant I captured the essence of a necessary iterative process that never ends:

I think we have only just begun this work, I think there is a whole hell of a lot more to do, I think it is never actually going to end. But if we think it will end, we are deluding ourselves. So, we are in it for the long haul and it means we have to build upon the foundation that we have been putting together over the last couple years. (I)

Change Systems. All participants referred to changing systems to achieve equitable outcomes but, no participant depicted this notion better than Participant I, on doing better practices better, and stop perfecting obsolete practices:

Old curriculum, old pedagogy, old grading practices, old reliance upon standardized testing and entrance exams, all of that produce inequitable results. So, systems produce the results that they are designed to produce, right? Whether we know it or not, or recognize it or not, that is what happens and so if you want to produce equity, as opposed to producing inequity, you need to change the systems that are productive of those things. So, one of the things I firmly believe and I talk about a lot as in my role as Head of School, is that we need to stop trying to do obsolete things better and start doing better things. (I)

Change Culture. Changing culture was described by nine participants as a necessary school-wide equity practice to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence within independent schools. Participants H and I portrayed changing culture in the most vivid way and its importance to creating a more equitable community. Participant H described a change in

culture based off who they were serving and elevated the importance of voices within their community:

We wanted to reflect who we were serving, and like I said, it is important not only for my students, but for the faculty and staff to see each other to have the opportunity to feel that their voice is important. That was a shift in culture so that the voice of faculty and staff, particularly around diversity, and inclusion has been elevated and made incredibly important. So, I am listening, and not only me, but the rest of the faculty. So, there is a place for voice and agency and that became important. (H)

Participant I took Participant H's serving others to another level and focused on the entire culture of the school as one entity of continuous improvement. Participant I argued that independent schools should create a culture of continuous learning and not just a strategic plan checklist to make themselves feel good, because those sentiments will:

That will get you so far. But it will not really get us to where we want to go, I think we need to think much bigger and much more forwardly about change and assume that it is never going to end. So, creating a culture of continuous reflection, and therefore continuous improvement, with an emphasis on a bias toward action from every member of the organization, from the custodian, to the teacher, to the Head of School, to the Board, and constantly thinking about how can we change what we do, improve what we do to produce the equitable community that we want to produce? Those are systems questions rather than individual behavior questions. (I)

Again, perhaps if schools were to have DEI woven into their culture, they may have responded as Participant K did about changing culture at their school, which was the transformational process within the people and not the school culture:

Our diversity is not an object of thought. The kids experience and encounter, and are expanded by each other every day, because they bump into each other and encounter each other. And it is through those interactions, some of them challenging, that they learn, and they grow. And they question truth and assumptions about themselves. So, I think it's fundamentally a transformative process, through experience. (K)

Summary

Chapter 4 provides the findings from the 11 Heads of school that participated in the study. This chapter aimed to depict the participants' experiences of leading independent school-

wide equity practices they utilized, barriers they have encountered, and the leadership behaviors that were necessary for achieving diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. Chapter 5 offers a detailed discussion and conclusions of the participants' experiences, in addition to implications of the study and further recommendations of study.

Chapter 5: Study Implications, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The current state of independent schools regarding educational equity is characterized by school-wide equity practice adoption to achieve diversity, inclusions and cultural competence. However, few independent schools have publicly described how they are battling educational equity school-wide practices to increase diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence even though almost 2,000 exist today (Maqubela, 2016; Salas, 2002; Snyder & Snyder, 1999). Additionally, Gous et al. (2014) declared that a broad knowledge base on how DEI was practiced in schools was not available. Therefore, Heads of independent schools should no longer join the inclusion conversation but propel it forward (Maqubela, 2016).

Diversity within the independent school system demands a global perspective and critical need to move toward more equitable ideologies and practices with leaders intensely, honestly, and intentionally examining and altering their equity practices to create equitable environments (Ford, 2017). However, there was scant diversity research on independent school leadership and their equity practices which called for evidence-based research on leadership plans for equity.

Therefore, this study aimed to shed light on the educational equity phenomena in independent schools to depict how schools addressed their students' diverse needs, prepared them for the real-world, and taught them to be moral agents, through diverse and inclusive practices, and necessary leadership behaviors to lead the cultural change and overcome persisting barriers (Denevi & Richards, 2009; Marblo, 2007). The following sections provide a reiteration of the study purpose and methods; explain key findings; present conclusions; and discuss implications of the research including recommendations for practices and future research in order to promote improved independent school equity.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenographic study was to explore how independent Heads of school in Southern California describe the school-wide equity practices they are utilizing, barriers they have encountered, and the leadership behaviors necessary for achieving diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school.

Research Questions

The three research questions that guided this phenomenographic study were:

1. How did Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the school-wide equity practices they utilized to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school?
2. How did Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the barriers they encountered as they addressed school-wide equity practices to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence practices at their school?
3. How did Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the leadership behaviors they utilized for school-wide equity practices to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence practices at their school?

Research Design

This study sought to understand the Heads of school specific human experience regarding the educational equity phenomena in independent schools as it manifested and appeared in the world. Because of the limited research regarding the Head's perspectives and experiences of their educational equity school wide-practices, barriers encountered and leadership behaviors that were necessary to lead a school toward more diversity, inclusion and cultural competence, abundant understanding was required. As it focused on specific experiences rather than the lived

experience in general, a phenomenographic design was adopted as it focused on conceptions of the phenomena (Crewell & Poth, 2016; Marton, 1981).

To capture the equity phenomena in independent schools, the researcher used semi-structured interviews to elicit meaningful and valid data. The semi-structured interviews of participants' responses provided thick and rich descriptions (Given, 2008). The thick and rich descriptions provided from the Head's responses investigated in this study could not have been properly derived or described from numerical data. Therefore, participants' responses drove the analysis of school-wide equity practices, barriers encountered, and leadership behaviors necessary to lead a school toward more diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence within their respective schools.

Discussion of Key Findings

This study's key findings are presented for each of the three research questions with alignment to the existing body of research. There was extensive research regarding school-wide equity practices, barriers encountered, and leadership practices necessary to achieve diversity, inclusions, and cultural competence in public schools, however, it was scant in the independent school literature database. This research captured independent school Heads' descriptions of the school-wide equity practices they were utilizing, barriers they have encountered, and the leadership behaviors that were necessary for achieving diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school and provided a baseline for further independent school equity research.

School-wide Equity Practices to Achieve Diversity, Inclusion and Cultural Competence

The first research question was designed to extract information on how Heads of independent schools in Southern California described the school-wide equity practices they

utilized to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school. Analysis of the participants' interviews produced four themes that related to this research question: (a) structural institutional alignment of school-wide practices; (b) engagement and education; (c) mindful strategic reflection; and (d) an interpersonal and interconnected culture.

Structural Alignment of School-wide Equity Practices. Participants that represented independent schools as exemplary regarding school-wide equity practices depicted an alignment of structural school-wide equity practices to their institutional diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) vision within all structural school-wide equity practices of the school. The vision of every school was to essentially transcend their community for the ultimate goal of teaching children. This aligned to research conducted by Denevi and Richards (2009), which encouraged schools to address constituencies' diverse needs, prepare them for the real-world, and teach them to be moral agents, through an array of school-wide practices. Few schools that had expressed the strength of their programs for some time further described systematically formalizing the vision based on the most efficacious equity practices.

Aligning Structural School-wide Practices to Vision. If schools were to achieve diversity equity and cultural competence, it must have included an array of structural school-wide equity practices: structural communications; funding practices; community-based partnerships, programs, and consultants; recruiting for constituency diversity, knowledge, and expertise; and curriculum and instruction. Participants continued to voice that their structural practices were adopted because of their institutional visions, missions, philosophies, commitments, goals, values, and expectations. Many of the participants referred to complete and total alignment of their practices with their visions, missions, philosophies, commitments, goals, values, and expectations. These findings were congruent with Chin and Trimble's (2015)

findings that acknowledged the fundamental importance of social justice and subsequently reconstructing their institutions and visions around equitable practices.

Systematic Formalization. Some participants described robust structural school-wide practices and others were actively identifying areas of improvement. Regardless of the participant, all described improving their structural school-wide equity practices through: equity reviews; authentic strategic plans; and systematic formalization. Equity reviews and authentic strategic plans were the initial stages of a systematic formalization of practices to the school's vision. Four participants announced they were ready to take their school-wide equity practices to a new level by deliberately and systematically formalizing efficacious practices. Simply put, school leaders have been leading school-wide equity practices for some time, but now they want to systematically lead those based on effective measures. Participants expressed that systematic formalization was the complete and total alignment of the most efficacious structural school-wide equity practices that truly produce the equitable results intended by their institutional vision into the fabric of their school. This research is comparable to Wehmiller and Withers (2007) promotion of their inclusive stage, of their six stages of diversity, and encouraged that all independent schools move toward a programming model that integrates diversity work into the fabric of the institutions.

Engagement and Education. Engagement and education were the constant involvement of all participants combined with the constant education of all participants necessary to adopt school-wide practices geared toward equity. Increased engagement had been shown to promote innovation and increased achievement of institutional goals, such educational equity (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Professional developments (PD's) and community-based learnings were the most adopted engagement and education practices on behalf of participant schools. The

knowledge gained from the training sessions were designed to increase awareness, support, and exposure for all school constituencies. Maqubela (2016) disclosed that parents wanted to send their children to a school that educated students for a world-post education, however, participants in this study described educating all constituencies, even outside community members, to adopt school-wide equity practices designed to achieve diversity, inclusion and cultural competence.

PD's and Community-based Learning For All Constituents. Professional developments and community-based learning opportunities to all constituents were necessary to increase understanding. These findings were consistent with Ford (2017) and Zehr (2003) which connected professional developments to improving language learning, cultural competence, and better interrelationships within independent schools. Although there was an abundance of educational opportunities offered as in-house training, as well as through community-based programs, partnerships, and consultants, participants urged the need for more education. Education and training offered practice for constituents and as Cashman (2017) stated, “nothing practice, is nothing gained” (p. 204) It is important to note that while institutions described their main commitment as educating students, several participants recognized that to educate students, independent schools must educate their parents. Participants described their encouragement towards others in attending the professional developments and others referred to ongoing professional development as a collective belief in their community.

Student Engagement in Particular. Although all participants were engaged, students were the most predominant constituency group that appeared to be engaged in adopting school-wide equity practices, were the students. This finding of giving voice and empowering student perspective were congruent with Dymond et al.'s (2008) findings that schools must engage and empower their students within the curriculum to increase equity and break down barriers.

Students had their voices engaged in the decision-making process at every school and within every structural practice identified. Student presence at leadership and DEI meetings; opportunities to design the physical plant; updating curriculum; choosing guest speakers; student-led groups; and community-based partnerships such as teen court were among the consistent opportunities provided for students to participate in the DEI growth process of the school. In addition to their growth, it was identified that students had to give back and help others grow through peer mentorship programs. Students were actively engaged in providing mentorship and guidance to younger and disadvantaged students. The youth mentorship findings were consistent with Rusch et al. (2019) findings showing youth mentorship to be an effective practice in serving disenfranchised communities, however, in this study it was still effective in affluent students learning as well as the disadvantaged students.

Raising Awareness, Increasing Exposure, and Providing Support to All Constituents.

School constituencies may have not always actively engaged and participated in the schools DEI growth for a variety of reasons. Sometimes, constituencies needed motivation, and encouragement from school leadership to help raise awareness, increase exposure, and provide support to the constituencies growth in accepting diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Affinity groups were the main school-wide equity practice they used to raise awareness, increase exposure, and provide support to all constituencies. Affinity groups created opportunities for constituency groups to affirm their identity. Providing spaces for constituency groups to affirm their identity is compatible with Datnow and Cooper's (1997) findings that supporting students of color and creating opportunities for them to affirm their racial identity is one of independent school's successes. It is noteworthy that although all participants' affinity groups were secluded to the specific identifying affinity group, perhaps the most integrated school maintained

inclusiveness even within their specific identifying affinity groups. This meant that even though you may have been a white student, you could still attend African American affinity groups to learn how to operate and participate in those spaces, but one would not lead in those spaces. This finding was not previously mentioned in literature. Affinity groups were not sufficient alone and other DEI groups, newsletters, blurbs, school's website, and support staff were adopted to provide more opportunities for all constituencies to experience, participate, and learn from each other toward the school vision.

Mindful Strategic Reflection. Mindful strategic reflection was the constant institutional review and reflective lens of policies, practices, and decision making that considered all perspectives to determine the most diverse, inclusive, and culturally responsive outcomes. In order to achieve the most equitable practices, independent schools and their leaders had to have mindful strategic reflection, thought processes, lenses and perspectives. This notion is congruent with Ford (2017) and NAIS (n.d.b) in that DEI work requires commitment, reflection, intentional planning and action, and accountability through diverse and fluid equitable practices within the dynamic school context (Ford, 2017; NAIS, n.d.b). Within this theme it was depicted that thoughtful conscious thought was necessary to update outdated policies. One of the major ways this conscious thought depicted mindful strategic reflection was by ensuring that participants experienced inclusivity and saw inclusivity. Mindful strategic reflection was necessary in all decision making of school-wide equity practices, and participants always maintained multiple reflective lenses in that process.

Updating Outdated Policies. School-wide equity practices and policies were updated because they simply did not produce the desirable equitable results that participants wanted. These findings are consistent with Arias's (2009) findings of eradicating "isms" from policies

and practices because of adopting the moral imperative that leaders should adopt. Participant's findings were also consistent with Ford's (2017) recommendation that independent schools may want to alter admission strategies. All participants described updating outdated policies to better achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their schools. Hiring and retaining faculty and students of color through admissions practices were the most common outdated practice that experienced updates. Social justice and equity approaches were also built into the fabric of the school by updating practices such as the restorative justice approach to discipline. Each school described unique examples of updating their policies, however, all were to create equitable practices that were aligned with the DEI institutional vision, that produced equitable results.

Feeling Inclusivity and Seeing Inclusivity. Feeling included in the school community and seeing others with the same characteristics helped create a true sense of belonging for constituency groups at participants' schools. These findings confirm CampbellJones et al. (2013) findings which provided a story that questioned the authentic experience of the African American student dressing up for early America's day, and how that made both the student and parents feel. Constituents feeling inclusivity and seeing inclusivity was necessary to achieve equity. That was accomplished through feeling safe, welcomed, belonged, seen, known, comfortable and seeing windows and mirrors. Seeing windows and mirrors was the visual representation of seeing themselves in mirrors reflected in the curriculum and personnel at the school as well as the visual representation of a window that depicts all of Los Angeles. Seeing windows and mirrors terminology had not been identified in previous research, however, Ford (2017) supported students and families' desire to see windows and mirrors in independent

schools by stating students of color need to see themselves in the teachers and the student body. This research demonstrates the same findings.

Mindful Decision Making. Mindful decision making was an institution's careful and thoughtful consideration combined with a maintained commitment to doing the right thing when adopting school-wide equity practices designed to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. This was consistent with M. Mitchell's (2016) opening remark that diverse student bodies benefited everyone and suggested it was the right thing to do. Although the term mindful decision making did not specifically appear in the literature observed, it aligned M. Mitchell's (2016) urging independent schools to recognize the financial aid shift to different socio-economic tiers and to consider its impact on admissions practices. Not only were Heads of school focused on financial mindful decision making, but they also maintained mindful admissions practices in providing authentic genuine experiences that did not just tokenize students but fostered true belonging. This finding was similar with M. Mitchell's (2016) conclusion that independent schools must approach enrollment barriers with consideration if they remain committed to the moral imperative. They also described leading with the most efficacious school-wide equity practices that focused on the right thing to do. Mindful decision making appeared to be closely connected to sustainability for the school's future.

Having a Reflective Lens. Participants described being able to constantly review school-wide equity practices and policies through different lenses. By having an array of lenses to view the practices and policies, participants were better able to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their institutions. Adopting different lenses is consistent with Maqubela's (2016) strong recommendation to independent schools to examine all school-wide equity practices with an inclusion lens. National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME,

2021) suggested schools should also use anti-bias, social justice, or counter narrative lenses when looking at curriculum. Participants in this study confirmed being reflective through multiple lenses and were mindful of the pace they adopted school-wide equity practices. Several stated patience was needed, and if practices were not adopted appropriately, there would be severe consequences. The most referred instance of patience revolved around adopting practices at a pace that the community could tolerate.

An interpersonal and Interconnected Culture. An interpersonal and interconnected culture was the institutional recognition of connectedness, interdependency and togetherness of both practices and people, necessary to adopt school-wide equity practices. Within this theme the school's culture was not able to function without constant feedback from the community to identify needs to grow. One such area of growth was cultural proficiency in the growing multicultural world. This finding is comparable with Banks's (2014) referral to the increasingly interconnected and interdependent world and recognized necessary cultural proficiency in students because it benefits everyone in the community.

Also, within this theme, was the notion that schools were only as strong as the people that it was composed of and the relationships that school leadership fostered. This finding was harmonious with previous findings from Cooper-Duffy (2008) that asserted effective inclusion required collaboration, team building, community, and relationships that mimicked the real world. All aspects of the school-wide equity practices, constituencies, and the institution itself were inseparable from one another, including the courageous dialogue that was endemic to the culture.

Community Perception and Feedback Matter to Identify Perceived Needs. There was consistent gathering feedback on behalf of the institutions to identify their perceived needs in the

DEI work. Participants described that they could not do it alone and needed to enlist the help of the entire community to help identify perceived needs. This finding is consistent with Romney et al.'s (2008) notion that any discrepancy in perception from constituencies of the school's commitment to education equity correlated to less success. Therefore, schools needed to constantly gather feedback to consider the community perception in identifying perceived needs. There were identified perceived needs unique to each participant, such as the need for additional support, and increasing more mirrors in the constituency groups because far too many people were still feeling marginalized.

It Is an All-connected School Culture. It was clear from participants' responses that independent schools were a connected culture such that every action, conversation, and school-wide practice or policy had corresponding consequences in every aspect of the community. The interconnected and interwoven culture of the equity practices paralleled Linton's (2013) findings that suggested a connected culture through establishing a connected equitable culture that was complicated and required many factors such as leadership, practices, personal optimism, and belief in students and the school, faculty, and staff's standard of excellence. Whether it was shared language or constantly developing the groundwork for an equitable institution, the message was loud, clear, and consistent that the equity groundwork was beneficial to everyone in the school community. Furthermore, Head's responses described that every school-wide practice, policy, program, service, structure, drive, curriculum, pedagogy, personnel, constituency, and conversation of the school was interconnected and mattered in achieving equity. Therefore, realizing educational equity through school-wide equity practices designed to achieve diversity, inclusion and cultural competence must incorporate an all-connected school culture to serve the community for greater good.

Relationships and Relations. Participants described an interpersonal and interconnected culture through the recognition that DEI work is relational and that relationships are vital to the health and success of school-wide equity practices. These findings are consistent with Ford's (2017) assertion that equitable school communities should help strengthen diverse constituencies coexistence and interrelationships because of school-wide equity practices. One way to accomplish DEI interrelationships was through senior leadership equity positions. Participants also described accomplishing diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence together, not singularity, including all constituencies to get to that goal. The willingness to share responsibility and allow others to take personal ownership within a distributive leadership approach mimicked Baal's (2011) findings that U.S. school leaders had begun distributing the leadership to other constituencies, recognizing the trust in having the right people on board to lead school-wide equity practices. Having the right people on board included having the right partnerships in place and acknowledged independent schools were not actually independent but actually interdependent. Participants continued to stress that the people in the school mattered the most, not buildings. Therefore, if people mattered the most, schools' investment both with time and funding should reflect the schools' priorities.

Courageous Dialogue From All Constituents. Courageous dialogue from all constituents was depicted by the participants in the study. Lack of engagement and apathy was not a suitable behavior for school constituencies at independent schools focusing on school-wide equity practices. It was asserted that at a minimum, school constituencies were required to engage in dialogue even if it was in direct opposition. Critical meaningful dialogue was required for the hard, difficult, messy work associated with DEI practice adoption. Equity work is relational, and requires difficult conversations, and this finding was compatible with Ford's (2017) assertion

that school-wide equity practices enabled courageous conversations from all constituencies to deconstruct stereotypes and biases toward diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Some participants referred to the critical meaningful dialogue as a minimum for school constituencies, and many described that having constituencies engage in courageous conversations was the apex of interpersonal growth and learning. As a result of the courageous dialogue that challenged constituencies assumptions, beliefs, privileges, and ideologies were discomfort, which was described as where the growth lied.

Encountered Barriers to School-wide Equity Practices

The second research question was designed to extract information on how Heads of independent schools in Southern California described the barriers they encountered as they addressed school-wide equity practices to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence practices at their school. Analysis of the participants' interviews produced one theme that related to this research question: (a) barriers to school-wide equity practices.

Barriers to School-wide Equity Practices. Adopting a change in culture, or adopting practices that had not previously been adopted, inevitably would have produced resistance from constituencies that did not fully accept change. As a result of the new school-wide equity practices, there were several barriers encountered as Heads planned to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their institutions. Participants identified that the barriers they have encountered were: constituencies unaware of the need to adapt; a lack of resources and school geographics; community perception; and direct and defiant resistance to change. Many of the barriers identified by participants are consistent with the previously existing research such as Lindsey et al.'s (2018) barriers to cultural proficiency. However, this study also included potential strategies to overcome the persistent equity barriers.

The Unawareness of the Need to Adapt. There was a consistent lack of education and awareness on behalf of constituencies described by participants in the study. The lack of education and awareness of information, perspectives, cultures, understanding, and knowledge of organizational change hindered participants' capacity to change. Constituencies often did not understand how school-wide equity practices helped everyone, which led to reluctance, hesitancy, fear, and anxiety of change. Teacher fear and anxiety in feeling like they always have to say, or do the right thing, was also notable. These findings were consistent with Chapman and Ainscow (2019) findings that suggested while some constituents embraced extra equity responsibilities, others have been reluctant, oftentimes due to lack of education or awareness. School constituencies were limited to the experiences and exposure in their life, often limited in privileged communities, which led to their beliefs of why do I need to change?

Community Perception. Community members and families' general perceptions played a barrier to achieving diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at participants' schools. This finding is compatible with Romney et al. (2008) demonstrating that community members beliefs and attitudes play a major role on school equity, as such independent leaders need to be aware, examine and responsive to community perceptions. The perception of school community members and their beliefs of the school are important, but this study demonstrated perhaps even more important was the perception of community members outside the school community, such as prospective families, in how they refer to the independent school, affecting the school's persona. The most notable perception from prospective families' assumptions they made about the school on the hill in Belair, and just independent schools in general, was that they were elitist. The other notable perception was the perception of community members as being

exhausted. Participants referred to being mindful about the amount of equity work placed on families and teachers because they were already “exhausted” from the pandemic.

Lack of Resources and Geographics. Although many participants described their finances as stable at a minimum, they all referred to money as limited, and that they could always use more to assist in adopting school-wide equity practices. The most common resource that was lacking for participants, was attracting, and retaining both students and faculty of color. For the faculty side, these findings are still compatible with Kane and Orsini’s (2003) claim that independent schools need to do better at attracting and retaining faculty of color. The attracting and retaining of students of color was not surprising considering the latest statistics from California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) show 39% children of color compared to the 73% children of color in the state of California (CAIS, 2020). However, this finding is a problem that continues to persist 20 years later.

Direct and Defiant Resistance to Change. Direct and defiant resistance to change was the complete unwillingness to change behaviors for the institutional vision and philosophy of an equitable community. Whether it was brainwashing, or raising children as color blinded, parents were often expressed as demonstrating direct and defiant resistance to the change of culture at independent schools. Other constituency groups were identified as defiantly resisting change, but it was the parent group that supplied the vast majority of backlash and hate emails. Direct resistance, defiance, and complete unwillingness of participants on behalf of constituencies toward the equity commitment would only thwart the change necessary. This finding was consistent with Kotter’s (2012) proposal that major transformation is unlikely if constituencies do not assist. Therefore, School Heads should note that empowering, engaging, and raising awareness amongst parents was essential to overcoming barriers and creating change within the

school community. Interestingly, as one participant specifically stated, they would rather have an entire contingent of individuals who explicitly disagree, because at least there was a conversation. Apathy on the other hand was the bigger problem, because of a complete and total lack of engagement, where nothing would be accomplished.

Strategies to Overcome Barriers to School-wide Equity Practices. Participants offered their planned strategies to overcome their unsolved barriers. There were three main strategies identified: increasing education and understanding; building relationships and trust; and engaging constituencies in dialogue. Participants that described building trust mimicked Linton's (2011) assertion that leadership can influence their institutional culture by developing trust while focusing on the organizational goal of equity. Additionally, participants that described increasing education and awareness of all constituents are consistent with previous findings that broadened understanding of cultural competence and led to higher esteem for students, teachers, and parents (Johnston et al., 2007; Sarraj et al., 2015). Participants described that by engaging constituents in more dialogue will create more opportunities for constituencies to be comfortable with the difficult conversations associated with equity.

Necessary Leadership Behaviors to Lead Independent Schools & Their Equity Practices

The third research question was designed to extract information on how Heads of independent schools in Southern California described the leadership behaviors they utilized for school-wide equity practices to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence practices at their school. Analysis of the participants' interviews produced two themes that related to this research question: (a) necessary leadership behaviors; and (b) changing a culture.

Necessary Leadership Behaviors. Participants described leadership behaviors, qualities, traits, characteristics, attributes, and specific actions that were necessary to lead independent

schools designed to achieve more diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. The notion of school leaders' effectiveness through their behaviors was similar to previous research that has already stated that the success of inclusive independent schools relied on the principal's leadership abilities to build inclusive environments (Edmunds & Macmillan, 2010). Within this theme, participants in this study referred to having to believe in the work, truly immersing yourself, and being front and center for the community to witness. One of the main duties of Heads in equity work was described as empowering, developing, and supporting others through their journey. Participants had to be mindful of where others were on that journey and aid in their transformation. Participants described that having a strong emotional intelligence was a requisite for leading school-wide equity practices. Lastly, if transformation was needed for constituents at their school, then the leaders had to be transformational, which was described by all participants.

Having to Believe in The DEI Work. Without personal belief in the work as the Head of school, two things would happen. At the first sight of any negative feedback leaders would shy away, or two, leaders would just jump to the next shiny thing without really caring about its consequence. This is why believing in the work was depicted by participants transpired from a deep-rooted place in their personal beliefs. These findings are congruent with A. N. Brown's (2013) equity efforts are not effective if key members of the community do not generally support the effort, and in independent schools there is no person more important than the Head of school to support and lead. The participants in the study described themselves as one of the most involved in their community, believing in racial equity and justice, and maintaining a commitment to their work despite resistance. Participants accomplished this by leading with data driven practices to back up their beliefs and through adopting a growth mindset, as opposed to a deficit mindset, which permitted reframing difficult conversations and decisions. Most

importantly participants were guided by their north star in every decision, and thought process, which was always for the best interest of the students, not their personal gain. Ultimately, the school and their school-wide equity practices benefited every time from that approach.

Empowering, Developing, and Supporting Others. It has already been mentioned that participants acknowledged they could not achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their schools alone. Empowering, developing, and supporting others, not only recognizes that notion, but takes it a step further, as a moral obligation on behalf of the school leader to assist others in their participation toward equity. School leaders required to be agents of social change was synonymous with Theoharis (2010) and Young's (2015) findings describing the moral obligation of school leaders as agents of social change that prod along constituencies to accomplish inclusive and diverse schools seeking to advance social justice. Participants were actively developing constituencies' capacity for change by encouraging shared language that could be understood by all. The Heads of school encouraged others to take risks, unleash their passion, and take personal ownership because of their personal belief in shared leadership, which allowed their schools to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. During the shared leadership model, participants did not lose sight of continuously intruding on others' journeys and challenging them slightly beyond their current capacity for change. The important of developing others is comparable prior research depicting coaching, challenging, and developing others as one of the three most important competencies of leaders (Cashman, 2017). Throughout the process of empowering, developing, and supporting constituencies competency journey, participants always returned back to the institutional mission and held others accountable to that.

A Strong Emotional Intelligence. To lead independent school-wide equity practices designed to achieve more diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence, it was essential that

leaders understood who they were first. It was suggested that the success of any intervention relies upon the interior condition of the intervener. Therefore, participants had to be fully self-aware of their strengths and weaknesses and continue to understand self-education would only contribute to a higher personal capacity for change. Participants essential self-awareness aligned with Wang et al.'s (2016) mandate that leaders must be self-aware of their thoughts, beliefs, values, emotions, and personal qualities to lead educational goals such as equity.

To assist in motivating constituencies toward the equity mission, participants expressed their vulnerability was critical, which was as simple as outwardly expressing they did not have all the answers. It was apparent that being able to ask good questions was more relevant than having good answers as a leader. Although great communication skills to explain why schools were pursuing specific school-wide equity practices was still necessary for school leaders. Leaders found time to escape and self-care through exercise, expressed compassion, referred to listening empathetically, and took accountability for others even when they did nothing wrong. In sum, the school leaders depicted knowing their constituencies, such that they could be empathetic towards their thoughts, beliefs, participation and needs. School leaders requiring empathy in order to be effective leaders was consistent with Wang et al. (2016) findings demonstrating effective leadership that was empathetic of other thoughts and feelings.

Transformational Leadership Behaviors. Participants expressed in their transcripts an overall raising of constituencies' consciousness, grounded in moral values, to increase equity at their schools, to seek fundamental change at their institutions. Therefore, Heads in this study depicted that transformational leadership behaviors are critical to leading independent school-wide equity practices designed to achieve diversity, inclusion, inclusion, and cultural competence. Participants consistently described their influence on their constituencies through

charisma, candor, vulnerability, storytelling, humor and explicitly declaring their equity goals. The most specifically addressed of these characteristics, explicitly declaring their equity goals aligns with White and Smith (2012) findings that required a clear mission and vision.

Heads always considered every unique individual by meeting them where they were at. This was consistent with Horwitz et al. (2008) findings of leaders understanding each member's uniqueness and assisting them in achieving their desired intrinsic needs. Assisting members did not mean leaders knew everything, in fact, leaders outwardly expressed humility in their process of leading. They referred to themselves making mistakes and being prepared for feedback from constituencies because of those mistakes. Essentially, leadership may require Heads to be a teacher and learner in the same relationship. Their humility transferred to gratitude in feeling lucky to be the Head of school, and to their recognition, if they expected others to change, they themselves had to be open for change.

Constant creative problem solving and modeling that behavior and others was abundant in participants testimonials on necessary leadership behaviors. The constant thinking outside of the box was harmonious with previous research showing innovative leaders who challenged school constituencies to think outside of the box, indicative of a transformational leader (B. Harper, 2016). Lastly, to be a transformational leader, participants expressed their personal courageous dialogue, such as the one participant that explicitly stated George Floyd's murder because they understood the constituencies emotions, whereas other Heads of school stated death of George Floyd. Those types of decisions from Heads displayed them being firm in their convictions, but participants also expressed they must be flexible to cater toward constituency needs, because after all it appeared to be a relationships first mentality. Participants' responses depicted Branch's (2019) findings that a transformational leader must understand school

constituencies' emotions, lead with love, use courageous language, and hold high expectations of a vision that includes excellence and success. The passion, commitment and excitement demonstrated by the heads was comparable with prior research showing leaders expressing their passion and excitement in leading such an amazing school, in a community of amazing people indicating their inspirational motivation and optimism of the future (Judge & Piccolo, 2004)

Changing a Culture. Even though the participants were asking questions regarding their educational equity, school-wide practices, barriers they encountered, and leadership attributes that were necessary to lead independent schools toward more diversity, inclusion and cultural competence, their responses depicted them leading a changing of culture at their school. Within this theme participants referred to responding to the changing world in real time, proactively brainstorming their future practices to meet community needs, and constantly developing a supportive learning environment that never ceases to exist. An iterative and supportive school culture through effective leadership was consistent with Garza et al. (2014) findings demonstrating the importance of leadership necessary to sustain or improve school performance by establishing a constantly evolving school culture driven by social justice and democratic ideals. Almost every participant referred to a different school culture prior to their tenure, suggesting that as leader it was their responsibility to change the culture toward the moral imperative of equity, regardless of what school-wide equity practices were adopted in the past.

Responding to an Evolving World in Real Time. As applications, iphones, and gps's constantly receive updates to better meet the needs of customers, independent schools also were depicted as constantly updating by Heads of school to meet constituencies needs in an ever-evolving world in real time. Participants described creating spaces and holding conversations as an immediate response to the apparent systemic racial injustice that persists in the United States.

Following Black Lives Matter protests, schools and their leader responded. Following the murder of George Floyd and trial of Derek Chauvin, schools and their leader responded. Following the Asian hate incident in Florida, schools and their leader responded. In this study it was depicted by Heads of school that it is not sufficient to evade present adverse events nor wait five years for a textbook to be written to guide action at the independent schools in response to the adverse events. Rather, Heads in this study depicted responding in real time because they knew their community better than anyone, which was consistent with previous research that demonstrated leaders understanding all community members' needs and appropriately responding to those needs which was indicative of a transformative leader working to change a culture (Gardner & Stough, 2002).

The Heads of school spearheaded these school-wide equity practice responses because they were aware of their constituencies' emotions and needs. Furthermore, these school-wide equity practices were adopted because it was the right thing to do. Leaders were always focused on making a difference and stuck to their north star of what is in the best interest of their students. Sometimes that is holding critical, meaningful dialogue spaces for their parents and teachers, to better meet the needs of the children.

The second part of responding to an evolving world in real time considered participants' responses to the ever growing multicultural and multiracial world. Participants were constantly updating their practices to support, attract, and retain students and faculty of color and marginalized groups. The most referenced marginalized groups included Black, POC, and BI-POC constituencies as participants examined their practices to better meet the needs of racial and ethnic groups. Several participants even acknowledged although there were many ways to achieve diversity, that was currently their focus.

Future Actions Planned. Being ready for the future was an underlying message suggested by the participants. It was if there was a constant feedback loop that was designed by the participants. First participants described gathering feedback, identified needs, brainstormed, creatively problem solved unique school-wide equity practices, implemented, increased awareness and support for that equity practice, evaluating the effectiveness of that school-wide equity practice and then repeated. Preparing the community for the future through school-wide equity practices was consistent with previous research promoting skills for the future, updating the curriculum for the future, and preparing for the 21st century challenges as essential leadership attributes for school leaders (Ford, 2017; Marzano et al., 2001; Salas, 2002). The school-wide equity practices school leaders described in this study for the future were more funding, more DEI personnel, increased clarity and explicitness in communications, continued programming to meet constituents needs, new structures, and more PD and engagement.

A Supportive Learning Environment. A supportive learning environment depicted by participants was a space where different perspectives were welcomed, backgrounds were understood, lenses were changed, notions were challenged, and it was okay. It did not mean that every belief was accepted by every constituency, rather it was the common agreement that unique individuals can coexist in the same space with different ideologies to enhance the learning, growth, and understanding of all constituencies. Participants did not refer to a supportive learning DEI environment that was easy, rather it was acknowledged as hard, difficult, and even messy work. However, where there was discomfort, there was growth. Where there were mistakes, there was opportunity to learn. It was the leadership's responsibility along with the institution to create a culture that supported mistakes of all their constituencies rather than exiling them compatible with Bass's (1998) findings that constituencies were likely to make

many mistakes, but transformative school leaders fostered their growth, understanding, and empowerment.

It is a Necessary Iterative Process. School-wide equity practices were described as always changing because constituencies at schools and communities were always changing, and, therefore schools must stay on the cutting edge of what is best for students. Because of this notion, participants suggested that they are constantly developing practices and constituencies competencies, to achieve the necessary growth needed for diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. All the independent schools in this study have adopted an equitable vision moving forward and planned their school-wide practices around that vision. Visionary leadership depicted by heads in this study were similar to Howden's (2018) findings of school leaders needing visionary and creative leadership to guarantee an equitable future for all.

Participants stated the continual development and necessary growth was as an iterative process, that included updating outdated inequitable systems, that produce inequitable outcomes, and persisted inequitable behaviors. The changing of systems began to create a more diverse, inclusive, and culturally competent culture. Participants described a general change in independent school culture. No longer was it suitable for a hierarchical leadership structure, rather a distributive leadership model that empowers others to contribute to the necessary growth needed in changing the culture. The distributive leadership model described by Heads in this study, that enhanced the changing of the culture indicating transformational leader was consistent with Sergiovanni's (2001) findings demonstrating the change process through adopting transformational values, such as a distributive leadership model, to encourage everyone to contribute their best in shaping the school in a new direction.

Study Conclusions

This study offers five research conclusions based on the participants' responses regarding their descriptions of their school-wide equity practices they utilized, barriers they encountered, and the leadership behaviors that were deemed necessary for achieving diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school.

Conclusion 1: Independent Schools Equity Change Starts With The Head of School

Participants repeatedly described necessary growth, development, and moving forward in their school-wide equity practices and personal constituencies capacities. Moving forward in their school-wide equity practices vividly painted a changing of systems, through a change in culture. Participants' responses to their school-wide equity practice process paralleled Kotter's (2012) eight-stage process of organizational change in their own unique words. However, true transformational organizational change starts with the leader. It has been shown that to become the CEO of organizational change, that all significant change must begin with the leader (Cashman, 2017).

After reflecting upon participants' responses, it became clear, they were simultaneously depicting a constant change in themselves as a leader, who then impacted the transformation of the rest of the community. Heads of school were more focused on transforming themselves, to transform others, to transform the culture of the school. The transformation of individuals was the imperative, not the school-wide equity practice adopted. This conclusion is consistent with Cashman's (2017) Peter Block quote in his book, *Leadership From The Inside Out*, "If there is no transformation inside each of us, all the structural change in the world will have no impact on our institution" (p. 137).

Ultimately, Heads of school steer the direction of independent schools. Yes, there are Board of Trustees (Board) that have the final say. However, only one participant declared none of their work would have been possible without the support of the Board, and they acknowledged even they almost failed to mention that. This suggested that the true captain of the DEI ship is the Head of school, case and point, participant C, stating their reason for why certain equity practices were adopted, “Um, why are they adopted? Because I felt strongly about them.” As such, independent school leaders seeking to adopt an equitable vision must transform their own beliefs, practices, and behaviors if they expect the same outcomes from the community, to produce an equitable school.

Conclusion 2: Leading DEI Takes Time, Innovation, and Problem Solving

Participants suggested that the change systems and change cultures repeatedly depicted were in place for individual transformation rather than systems. Participants described that it was a constantly evolving process and that perfection was not the goal, rather continued progress. This is consistent with David Bohm’s quote in Cashman’s (2017) book, *Leadership From The Inside Out*, “The ability to think differently is more important than the knowledge gained” (p. 206). The practices and policies adopted that were designed to educate and create understanding, were most valuable in creating new opportunities to think differently for constituencies, not the knowledge gained.

Unfortunately, constituencies gaining the ability to think differently is an arduous process. It was described that many constituencies at the independent schools had their personal beliefs challenged by others in the community resulting in a grief process. Although it was indicative of transformational leaders to challenge others’ beliefs, it will never be easy for a constituency to hear they have been wrong. Understanding that grief process, school leaders

were innovative and creatively problem-solved, mostly interpersonal barriers, to achieving diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. The creative school-wide practices allowed constituencies to see through alternative lenses, combined with the use of situational questioning from the Head of school, fostered an ethos of transformation.

One of the main outcomes of problem solving designed by the independent schools and their leaders in this study was to create an inclusive environment. Leaders took a deliberate approach to their programming and atmosphere to create an inclusive environment, that was authentic and one in which the community could feel belonged. Constituents feeling inclusivity and seeing inclusivity was necessary to achieve equity. That was accomplished through feeling safe, welcomed, belonged, seen, known, comfortable and seeing windows and mirrors. Seeing windows and mirrors was the visual representation of seeing themselves in mirrors reflected in the curriculum and personnel at the school as well as the visual representation of a window that depicts all of Los Angeles. Seeing windows and mirrors terminology had not been identified in previous research, however, this finding supported Ford's (2017) statement that students and families desired to see themselves in the teachers and the student body.

Conclusion 3: Heads of School Focus on DEI Learning For Everyone

Typically, when schools are referenced, the first thing that comes to mind is student growth and learning. However, as independent schools experienced growth through school-wide equity practices, it was evident that every school member had ample opportunities to participate in their own personal DEI learning, which aided the school's growth process. Independent schools therefore are not just for student growth and learning. Independent schools are for the growth and learning of students, parents, faculty and staff, administration, Board, alumni, extended family members, and even community members not associated with the school. Krüger

& Yorke (2010)'s findings parallel this conclusion in that the importance of a diverse learners growth mindset philosophy, spearheaded by Heads, was the source of potential learning for the entire community. Heads fostered the learning of everyone, were invested in the community to serve the common good, and truly cared for their community regardless of if they wore the same shirt.

Every constituency's participation in the school-wide equity practices varied, however their impact and presence were entwined to the school culture. Heads of school expressed interpersonal and interconnected cultures and further identified systems thinking as a necessary attribute for independent school leaders to have, compatible with Wehmiller and Withers' (2007) institutionalizing the work. The system's thinking acknowledged that every school-wide practice, budget, curriculum, facility, curriculum, policy, program, drive, structure, and facet of the school was interconnected to the culture. Participants continued to stress that the human beings in the school community mattered the most, not buildings. Therefore, if people mattered the most, schools' investment both with time and funding should reflect the schools' priorities. Interpersonal relationships came first before structures and finances because individual growth drove the success of the school-wide equity practices, not vice versa. Heads of school understood that constituencies that become more culturally proficient, possessed the capacity for change, broke down barriers, which impacted cultural awareness for everyone, both within and outside of the schools' walls (Lindsey et al., 2018).

Conclusion 4: Heads of School View School-Wide Equity Barriers as Opportunities

Regardless of the barrier encountered, Heads of school in the study consistently suggested that their personal outlook mattered considerably more than the barrier itself. For example, many of the schools expressed their community as privileged. One suggested the

positive outlook of not believing in an esoteric privilege but rather the privilege of living in the community. This outlook promoted gratitude instead of guilt and raised awareness to school constituencies to give back in their free time to those who were less privileged. Adopting a positive outlook was comparable to Ashkanasy and Tse's (2000) findings of transformational leaders evoking positive thinking among followers towards new visions such as educational equity, because the school Heads modeled that behavior.

Perhaps the most consistent barrier amongst heads in this study was the attraction and retention of students and faculty of color. Difficulty attracting and retaining students and faculty of color was consistent with claims from Kane & Corsini (2003). Although heads were discouraged from the difficulties of attracting and retaining, they expressed optimism in identifying new search firms, programming, school-wide equity practices, personnel, and explicit school philosophy and commitment that would bolster their chances of attracting and retaining faculty of color.

Heads habitually described positive outlooks, acknowledging that it is not what you do, but how you do it, and how you view it. As one participant described, "when it comes to resistance, it is always going to be there, you need to be aware of it" suggested that participants were always going "to do" something in response to overcome, but their positive outlook was far more superior. Many Heads may not have wanted to deal with direct opposition, but Participant I suggested that is where growth is, because at least conversations can occur, clearly depicted viewing opportunities rather than the deficits. This transformational thought process was consistent with the teacher's mindset at Phillips Exeter Academy that spearheaded the change from "handicapped access" to "universal access" campaign that believed in no barriers (Hassan, 2009). As constituencies adopted this view, it slowly transformed into the school's ideology.

Conclusion 5: Transformational Leadership is Necessary to Address Equity Practices

Independent schools that are adopting school-wide equity practices to achieve diversity, inclusion and cultural competence must have Heads of school that display transformational leadership. Furthermore, schools that are seeking to systematically formalize their school-wide equity practices to achieve the most efficacious practices, also must have transformational leaders (Wehmiller & Withers, 2007). The first attribute that Heads adopted to display transformational leadership was believing in the work. Regardless of their belief's years ago, all Heads believed in school-wide equity practices that benefited everyone because it was the right thing to do. Secondly, Heads of school explicitly voiced their beliefs, in addition to the aligned vision of the school for all constituencies to hear.

Following those two transformational behaviors, Heads exhibited a vast array of leadership behaviors such as courageous dialogue with all constituencies as well as in their communications to the community. Presence, modeling expected behaviors, self-involvement and personal education was apparent. Heads hinted toward their presence and involvement made it easier to ask a constituency, such as a teacher, to do something when Heads were already doing it themselves. Their presence and self-involvement associated with transformational leadership allowed Heads of school to hold individuals accountable, be grounded in their beliefs, but also flexible to individual circumstances. Knowing individuals and their needs in the community was a responsibility of the Head, as they simultaneously expressed exceptional interpersonal charisma and strong emotional skills, which were obligatory for the transformation of individuals. These findings were consistent with Ciulla (2004) where she stated necessary interpersonal charisma was inherent to leaders seeking to transform followers.

Achieving equity in independent schools was not easy and adopting school-wide equity practices received some sort of resistance or apathy from every participant. Understanding this fact, Heads consistently placed individuals slightly beyond, or further, than their comfort level to induce growth. Heads understood that cultural change would not occur if the school and its constituents were not willing to address issues of class, race, gender, and tensions necessary to sustain diversity. This finding is similar to Coleman's (2010) findings of cultural change requiring constituency buy-in and getting others on board. Having the right people on board included having the right partnerships in place and acknowledged independent schools were not actually independent but actually interdependent.

Heads also recognized that they were not always the most knowledgeable one in the room and sometimes their comfort level would be challenged by community members, meaning they had to be the learner too. Heads of school admitted when they were wrong, and even apologized for others when they did not have to. Most importantly, Heads inspired the raising of individuals' consciousness and capacity for change. Lastly, they always came back to their north star. That north star at independent schools was student learning and every other community member's learning too.

Recommendations for Practice

This phenomenographic study adds to the limited field of research regarding how independent school Heads describe their school-wide equity practices, barriers they have encountered, and necessary leadership attributes necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion and cultural competence. While there was literature that focused primarily on diversity leaders' experiences and perspectives of effective diversity leadership for educational equity at independent schools, this study aimed to understand the Heads' experience and perspectives.

From the 11 Heads' responses, six main recommendations were identified for current and future Heads at independent schools: (a) begin the transformation with yourself; (b) adopt a distributive leadership model immediately; (c) recognize that DEI is human transformation; (d) base DEI practices in continuous improvement cycles; (e) systematically formalize all DEI practices when ready through effective organizational management; and (f) develop quantitative measures to bolster the qualitative evidence.

The first recommendation is that Heads must accept the first step in the transformational process, self-transformation, before requesting something from others. Heads need to raise their understanding and capacity for change prior to raising the consciousness of others.

The second recommendation is to adopt a distributive leadership style structure within the independent school which public schools have already begun (Baal, 2011). All the Heads in the study referred to their willingness to share leadership to provide personal ownership amongst other school members. The quicker an authentic distributive leadership style is adopted, the quicker independent schools will realize success because school members will be given opportunities to transform.

The third recommendation is that Heads of school must acknowledge that the opportunities to transform members is relational work. Heads must foster a supportive learning environment that allows all school constituencies to fail and fail big, without feeling like a criminal that has been extradited. Heads must cultivate a safe institutional atmosphere where beliefs are safe, valued, listened to, and will be appropriately challenged without being ostracized. In Adam Grants book, *Think Again*, he states "The absence of conflict is not harmony, it's apathy" (p. 80). As one participant specifically stated, they would rather have an entire contingent of individuals who explicitly disagree, because at least there was a

conversation. Apathy on the other hand was the bigger problem, because of a complete and total lack of engagement, where nothing would be accomplished.

The fourth recommendation accepts that this relational transformation takes time, and the Head must adopt a continuous improvement cycle mentality of gathering feedback, implementing, and evaluating the effectiveness of their practices. Heads must create feedback loops where they are listening to their community members, to identify perceived needs, to brainstorm their next plan of action.

The fifth recommendation encourages Heads to systematically formalize their school-wide equity practices once they are ready. At some point after endless continuous DEI improvement cycles, the culture will be nearing full integration, and the independent schools will be ready to efficaciously formalize their entire system. It is important to note a systematically formalized independent school designed to achieve full integration based on effective measures, will not be successful, if the people are not transformed and fully integrated themselves. For Heads to fully understand the systematic formalizations process that succeeds aligning structural practices to the institutional vision, it is mandatory that Heads of independent schools be fully understanding of the organizational change process. The transformation necessary for independent schools to be systematically formalized cannot be based on whim decision making, but rather efficacious change management processes such as Kotter's eight-step process (Kotter, 2012).

The last recommendation for practice is a quantitative measure recommendation. While this study provided extensive rich and thick qualitative data from the participants, they also described a lack in effective quantitative measures. Furthermore, one participant even described they are currently engaged in a consortium of 73 other schools to develop effective quantitative

measures, because it is non-existent. Therefore, Heads could consider either developing their own quantitative effective measures, or join and be aware of consortiums seeking to develop more efficacious quantitative measurement tools.

Study Limitations and Internal Study Validity

This study does pose some limitations. Even though this study yielded extensive rich and thick data from participants regarding Heads' experiences in describing how they utilized school-wide equity practices, barriers encountered and leadership behaviors that were necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence, it still had a relatively small sample size. Furthermore, this study did not recognize race for participants as part of the demographic questions nor identify solely Heads of color in the recruitment process. Another limitation was a skewed majority of co-educational day schools in the participant sample, which does not fully depict the entire independent school composition. Independent schools also are comprised of many same-sex, religious, and boarding schools. The last limitation of the study is the researchers personal bias. No matter how thorough one could be in bracketing their experience, one's bias and perspective will inevitably permeate the extensive thick and rich data from participants producing omitted pertinent information and a particular lens of findings discussion.

Although this study did maintain some inherent limitations, the study is still internally valid. This study used a validated interview protocol, rigorous analysis process using expert peer reviewers, adopted qualitative analysis software, and was consistently based in research while constantly connecting to the transformational leadership framework.

Recommendations for Future Research

This section offers future researchers' recommendations for future study and development regarding educational equity descriptions in independent schools.

This study did not require participants to identify their race, although many identified themselves as white, only one participant identified themselves as a person of color. The latest statistics show roughly 11% average Heads of color in independent schools (Diversity in Leadership, 2018). Therefore, future research should seek to understand Heads of color descriptions of school wide-equity practices they are utilizing, barriers they have encountered and leadership behaviors necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence to conclude complete and integrated findings.

This study was limited to mostly co-educational day schools. There was one all girls preparatory school and one religious affiliated school. Therefore, to deepen our understanding on educational equity practices, barriers encountered, and leadership behaviors necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion and cultural competence at independent schools, future researchers should seek to understand Heads perspectives from a uniform school sample: religious affiliated, same-sex, or a majority boarding, independent school population.

Heads of schools in this study offered their process of practices regarding educational equity. The study did not include specifically asking Heads about their end game even though they all provided their plan to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence. Diving deeper into the end game is necessary for future researchers in independent schools because there needs to be a clearer picture of what achieving educational equity in independent schools truly means. Is it when the school's diversity matches the community's diversity? The state? The country? Or is reaching diversity operationally defined by the institution or community? Does every single multicultural, multiracial, inclusive group have to be represented? Is that something that is truly achievable or is that a glass ceiling? These questions are still unanswered and future

researchers seeking to prod along equity in independent schools could start by finding the answers to those questions.

Only one of the participants in this study referred to their school as a successfully integrated program. One of the limitations of this study was seeking out independent schools that were deemed exemplary with their school-wide equity practices. Rather than continue to look at exemplary schools providing school-wide equity practices, future research on education equity in independent schools could primarily focus on successfully integrated independent schools. Future researchers could seek out successfully integrated programs and gear their questions around systems thinking of school culture and climate, rather than individual practices as this sought.

Final Considerations

I have spent an eternity of endless hours reading, writing, revising, applying for research, conducting research, engaging in dialogue, and repeated that process a million times over to complete this dissertation. It may be one of the greatest legacies that I ever leave to the world. As I sit here finishing my final thoughts I cannot displace the current systemic racism, Black Lives Matters, Asian hate, Pandemic exhaustion that only exacerbated inequity witnessed with my own eyes, from the culminating message. Heads of school and independent school leaders alike, I urge you to consider your legacy and transformational potential you have, if you do not know where to look continue reading below and perhaps adopt mine.

My Legacy

I understand that many Heads of school in this study described progress, not perfection as their belief system. Today, I do not believe in that notion as a leading narrative. I am a white, 31-year-old male conducting educational equity research in independent schools. I am the antithesis

of diversity and the blueprint of privilege. It is not that I have never experienced inequality, I have, but I now recognize it is nowhere near the number of times much of the world and perhaps individuals still reading this dissertation have experienced.

As you consider who enters your school, I encourage you to allow people to make mistakes and tell the families that enter your school that their child is going to fall, and fall big at times. Why? Because life is hard and we want children to experience everything as a child, including substantial psychological falls to prepare them for a world ridden with injustice, death, disease, and war. However, Heads, I also encourage you to include to those prospective parents that there is no better of a place, no safer of a place, to fall than here. Encourage prospective families that you support their child, their family, their beliefs, and you will always be available to help and support when they need it. That unconditional support for individuals' beliefs and mistakes should exist for every member of the community. Sometimes mistakes may be wrapped up in a personal belief. Understand that everyone is limited to their experiences and exposure equating to limited beliefs. However, are anyone's beliefs more important than anyone else's? For me the answer is no in an equitable community.

Be very clear on your expectations of what is expected of the community in terms of actions and behavior. I say this because if you create a culture of unconditional support to those who make mistakes, it should not matter how severe the action is. In reality, some actions may necessitate immediate removal, but that contradicts promoting unconditional support and telling a child we support you fully, except for X, Y, and Z. That is why one of my recommendations suggested studying the definition of an equitable community. Is an equitable community a fully supportive environment? Is an equitable community or fully supportive community truly attainable or is it a glass ceiling? If they are not attainable then perhaps, we should reconsider our

systems and the outcomes we are producing. If they are attainable then perhaps, we should reconsider our systems and the outcomes they are producing as well.

What has the notion of progress, not perfection produced? Amazon, Apple, Ford, Oracle, Nike and 99.9% of businesses run on the concept of progress, needing to produce better results than they did last year. From the adoption of fiat currency to the industrial revolution, to computer processing, and now to the digital revolution, our “human progress” has vividly painted the “progress outcomes.” Is progress greater than the cost of progress? I am not implying progress is wrong, but perhaps there is an alternative leading narrative, and the leading narrative that I would like to propose to you is that rather than seeking progress, not perfection, seek harmony with the world. Harmony with the world includes doing what is right for the planet, preventing climate change, and including your convicted felon brother or sister who made one mistake and paid their time. Unconditional harmony at independent schools is doing what is right for students for bettering the world. Those that seek progress, not perfection I encourage you to see that progress still implies you must be better than you were before. Well, what if you are not? What if you have a degenerative disease and you only decline. I also encourage you to consider the cost of progress. Harmony can always be achieved in every domain and is the cost of harmony greater than harmony? For me the answer seems like no.

We as educators preach and instill goals that are attainable. So, why would we ever adopt a goal system of progress, that includes perfection as the climax of progress? That is a system that can never be attained by anyone. Harmony is attainable because you are in charge, it just requires us to figure out what that means for each of us individually. The more people that find harmony, the more harmonious the school culture will become and perhaps more equitable and more supportive of all different cultures, races, inclusive groups, and unique individuals. Maybe

that is the day that we will realize the declaration of human rights where education should develop a human personality that promotes understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all races, religions, nations, and groups and shall further bring peace.

Once again, it is just a proposal, a possible narrative to seek, because I know that I would not rather have the same problems persisting for another 100 years. Thank you for reading my dissertation and listening to my thoughts. God bless and may you find harmony and love in all that you do.

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APPENDIX A

Participant Recruitment Letter of Intent



Dear [Name]

My name is Christopher Lemieux, and I am a doctoral candidate in the Graduate School of Education & Psychology at Pepperdine University. I am conducting a research study examining independent school Heads' specific experiences on school-wide equity practices, barriers, and leadership behaviors and you are invited to participate in the study. If you agree, you are invited to participate in a semi-structured interview consisting of six demographic questions and eleven interview questions related to your experiences regarding the utilization of school-wide equity practices, barriers encountered, and the leadership behaviors necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school. The semi-structured interview is anticipated to take no more than one hour of your time and will be audio-recorded with your permission.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your identity as a participant will remain anonymous during and after the study. To ensure confidentiality, the researcher will remove any personal or institutional identifying information from the transcriptions by issuing gender-neutral pseudonyms. All transcriptions will be stored in a password-protected account on Otter.ai. All other data and coding will be stored on the researcher's password-protected computer.

If you have questions or would like to participate, please contact me at Christopher.Lemieux@pepperdine.edu.

Thank you for your participation,

Christopher Lemieux
Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology
Doctoral Candidate

APPENDIX B

IRB Approval Notice



Pepperdine University
24255 Pacific Coast Highway
Malibu, CA 90263
TEL: 310-506-4000

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: March 25, 2021

Protocol Investigator Name: Christopher Lemieux

Protocol #: 21-03-1557

Project Title: EDUCATIONAL EQUITY IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS: A PHENOMENOGRAPHIC STUDY OF SCHOOL-WIDE EQUITY PRACTICES, BARRIERS, AND LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND CULTURAL COMPETENCE.

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Christopher Lemieux:

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research

APPENDIX C

Letter of Informed Consent

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

IRB #: 21-03-1557

FORMAL STUDY TITLE

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS: A PHENOMENOGRAPHIC
STUDY OF SCHOOL-WIDE EQUITY PRACTICES, BARRIERS, AND LEADERSHIP
BEHAVIORS NECESSARY TO ACHIEVE DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND CULTURAL
COMPETENCE

AUTHORIZED STUDY PERSONNEL

If you have any questions or concerns about the research at any point during the study, you may contact Christopher Lemieux (Primary Investigator) at christopher.lemieux@pepperdine.edu; or Dr. Molly McCabe (Committee Chair) at molly.mccabe@pepperdine.edu. If you chose to speak over the phone, corresponding numbers are listed below.

Principal Investigator: Christopher Lemieux, MS.

Committee Chair: Dr. Molly McCabe, EdD.

PARTICIPANT INVITATION

You are invited to take part in this research study. The information in this form is meant to help you decide whether or not to participate. Please read the sections below, and if you have any questions or concerns, please ask before deciding to participate. If you choose to participate, please sign this form, and you will be given a copy for your records.

WHY YOU ARE BEING ASKED TO BE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY?

You are receiving this letter of informed consent because you have preliminarily responded to the recruitment letter of intent from Christopher Lemieux, Doctoral Candidate at Pepperdine University. You have been identified because of your official status as an independent school Head or title equivalent and your three-plus years of experience at your position at an exemplary independent school in Southern California under one of the umbrella associations (LAIS, CAIS, and NAIS).

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this phenomenographic study is to explore how independent Heads of school in Southern California describe the school-wide equity practices they are utilizing, barriers they have encountered, and the leadership behaviors necessary for achieving diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school.

STUDY PROCEDURES

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to participate in an anticipated hour-long interview with Christopher Lemieux. The interview consists of six demographic questions and eleven interview questions related to your experiences regarding the utilization of school-wide equity practices, barriers encountered, and the leadership behaviors necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school. Following each interview question are planned follow-up questions to probe further detail. The interview will be audio-recorded through Zoom, then transcribed using Otter.ai. The researcher will be the only one able to access the transcriptions. To ensure confidentiality, the researcher will remove any personal or institutional identifying information. If you would like to see the transcription the researcher will offer you a copy.

USAGE OF DATA

The researcher will be the only one to access the transcriptions with personal information. Following the interview, the primary researcher will de-identify any personal information for both you and your institution. Thereafter, the researcher will begin the initial coding of your responses. Your coded data will be shared with two expert peer reviewers to establish a coding consensus. Any personal information that could identify you or your school will be removed before your data is shared with the two expert peer reviewers.

POTENTIAL RISKS/DISCOMFORTS TO PARTICIPANTS

The study poses minimal risk to the participant. This research presents risk of loss of confidentiality, emotional and/or psychological distress because the surveys involve sensitive questions about your work habits. More specifically, Heads of school are used to answering equity questions and the study should not pose more than minimal risk to participants. The risks associated with the study's participation include slight anxiety due to an hour-long interview and personal reflection that may signal a potential need to do more. Even though schools will be given a pseudonym, the limited number of schools pose a potential risk when discussing the school profile. This potential risk means public knowledge of school-wide equity practices, barriers faced, and personal leadership behaviors necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS

The main benefit this study poses to participants is a feeling of hope and gratitude, contributing to something larger than themselves, such as educational equity in independent schools. However, you may not get any benefit from being in this research study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS FOR OTHERS

The study outcomes could potentially benefit students, teachers, school leaders, and independent schools seeking to address educational equity within their community. The anticipated benefits to independent schools, their constituencies, and society, in general, include: (1) Assist independent schools and other school leaders seeking to develop educational equity within their community (2) Knowledge and awareness of other school-wide practices (3) Knowledge and awareness of potential barriers and how to overcome them (4) Knowledge and understanding of the leadership behaviors necessary to achieve equity (5) Improving independent school-wide equity practices that focus on diversity, inclusion and cultural competence that may directly benefit society as a whole.

PARTICIPATION ALTERNATIVES

Instead of being in this research study, you can choose not to participate.

COST TO PARTICIPANT

There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

PARTICIPATION COMPENSATION

There is no financial compensation to participate in this study. Rather, it is my hope that participants are compensated for their passion and fulfillment in furthering educational equity in independent schools.

IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM DURING RESEARCH STUDY - WHAT TO DO?

Your welfare is the major concern of every member of the research team. If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the beginning of this consent form.

PROTECTIONS FOR THE PARTICIPANT

Reasonable steps will be taken to protect your privacy and the confidentiality of your study data. The data will be stored electronically through a secure server and will only be seen by the research team during the study and for three years after the study is complete. The only persons who will have access to your research records are the study personnel, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by law. The information from this study may be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as group or summarized data and your identity will be kept strictly confidential.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. For study-related questions, please contact the investigator(s) listed at the beginning of this form. For questions concerning your rights or complaints about the research contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB):

Phone: 1(310) 568-2305

Email: gpsirb@pepperdine.edu

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study (“withdraw”) at any time before, during, or after the research begins for any reason. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with Pepperdine University (list others as applicable). You will not lose any benefits to which you are entitled.

DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT - SIGNATURE

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to be in this research study. Signing this form means that (1) you have read and understood this consent form, (2) you have had the consent form explained to you, (3) you have had your questions answered and (4) you have decided to be in the research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK SURVEY

To meet Pepperdine University’s ongoing accreditation efforts and to meet the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs (AAHRPP) standards, an online feedback survey is included: <https://forms.gle/nnRgRwLgajYzBq5t7>

APPENDIX D

Interview Question Protocol with Corresponding Literature

Research Questions (RQ)	Corresponding Interview Questions (IQ)	Corresponding Literature
RQ 1 = How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the school-wide equity practices they utilize to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school?	IQ1. What financially raised or funded school-wide equity practices such as scholarships, capital campaigns or fundraisers do your school have to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence?	Adams, 2018; Arias, 2009; AISNE, nd; Daniels, 2011; Denevi and Richards, 2009; Ford, 2017; Göransson et al., 2013; Jóhannesson, 2006; KidsCount, 2020; Kyriakides et al, 2019; Leavitt, 2010; Lindsey et al., 2018; Linton. 2013; Maqubela, 2016; McCrimmon, 2004; Min & Goff, 2016; Gous et al., 2014; NAIS, n.d., b; NEASC, nd; Parkman 1963; Paz, 2008; Snyder & Snyder, 1999; Zehr, 2003
RQ 1 = How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the school-wide equity practices they utilize to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school?	IQ2. What structural school-wide equity practices such as your school's mission, philosophy, and physical plant do your school have to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence?	Adams, 2018; AISNE, nd; Arias, 2009; Bassett, 2008; Bochenek & Brown, 2001; CAIS, 2020; Daniels, 2011; Datnow & Cooper, 1997; Farkas et al., 1990; Ford, 2017; Ganley et al., 2019; Göransson et al., 2013; Gous et al., 2014; Griffiths, 2013; Gurin, 1999; Jairrels, 1999; Jóhannesson, 2006; Kaufman, 2003; KidsCount, 2020; Kyriakides et al, 2019; Leavitt, 2010; Lindsey et al., 2018; Linton. 2013; Marblo, 2007; McCrimmon, 2004; Min & Goff, 2016; Moreno et al., 2014; NAIS, 2020; NAIS, n.d., b; Nameorg.org, 2021; NEASC, nd; Paz, 2008; Pollard, 2013; Romney et al, 2008; Snyder & Snyder, 1999; Van Hoof & Hansen, 1999
RQ 1 = How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the school-wide equity practices they utilize to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school?	IQ3. What school-wide equity practices, such as constituency diversity and constituency knowledge/expertise, do your school have to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence?	Adams, 2018; AISNE, nd; Arias, 2009; Bassett, 2008; Bochenek & Brown, 2001; CAIS, 2020; Daniels, 2011; Datnow & Cooper, 1997; Farkas et al., 1990; Ford, 2017; Ganley et al., 2019; Göransson et al., 2013; Gous et al., 2014; Griffiths, 2013; Gurin, 1999; Jairrels, 1999; Jóhannesson, 2006; Kaufman, 2003; KidsCount, 2020; Kyriakides et al, 2019; Leavitt, 2010; Lindsey et al., 2018; Linton. 2013; Marblo, 2007; McCrimmon, 2004; Min & Goff, 2016; Moreno et al., 2014; NAIS, 2020; NAIS, n.d., b; Nameorg.org, 2021; NEASC, nd; Paz, 2008; Pollard, 2013; Romney et al, 2008; Snyder & Snyder, 1999; Van Hoof & Hansen, 1999
RQ 1 = How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the school-wide equity practices they utilize to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school?	IQ4. What school-wide equity practices such as curriculum and instruction aspects do your school have to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence?	Adams, 2018; AISNE, nd; Arias, 2009; Banks & McGee-Banks, 2019; Curtis, 1998; Daniels, 2011; Denevi & Richards, 2009; Ford, 2017; Gous et al., 2014; Jóhannesson, 2006; KidsCount, 2020; Kyriakides et al, 2019; Leavitt, 2010; Lindsey et al., 2018; Linton. 2013; McCrimmon, 2004; Min & Goff, 2016; NAIS, n.d., b; Nameorg.org, 2021; NEASC, nd; Paz, 2008; Romney et al., 2008; Van Hoof & Hansen, 1999;

		Mohan et al., 2013; Salas, 2002; Sizer, 2008; Snyder & Snyder, 1999; Walton et al., 2009
RQ 1 = How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the school-wide equity practices they utilize to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school?	IQ5. What school-wide equity practices such as community-based partnerships, programs, and PD's do your school promote or sponsor to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence?	Adams, 2018; AISNE, nd; Arias, 2009; Daniels, 2011; Ford, 2017; Gous et al., 2014; Jóhannesson, 2006; KidsCount, 2020; Kyriakides et al, 2019; Leavitt, 2010; Lindsey et al, 2018; Linton. 2013; Maqubela, 2016; McCrimmon, 2004; Min & Goff, 2016; NAIS, n.d., b; NEASC, nd; Paz, 2008; Rusch, et al., 2019; Salas 2002; Snyder & Snyder, 1999
RQ 1 = How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the school-wide equity practices they utilize to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school?	IQ6. What school-wide equity practices such as institutional awareness or support, aka identifiable need, do your school have to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence?	Adams, 2018; AISNE, nd; Arias, 2009; Bassett, 2008; Christie & Vuchic, 2000; Cooper-Duffy, 2008; Daniels, 2011; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Farkas et al., 1990; Ford, 2017; Göransson et al., 2013; Gous et al., 2014; Jóhannesson, 2006; Johnston et al., 2007; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; KidsCount, 2020; Kyriakides et al, 2019; Leavitt, 2010; Lindsey et al., 2018; Linton. 2013; Marshall, S., 1995; McCrimmon, 2004; Min & Goff, 2016; NAIS, n.d., b; Nameorg.org, 2021; NEASC, nd; Paz, 2008; Romney et al., 2008; Sarraj et al., 2015; Synder & Snyder, 1999; Walton et al., 2009; Zehr, 2003
RQ 1 = How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the school-wide equity practices they utilize to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school?	IQ7. Are there any other school-wide equity practices that you have yet to mention or are there any other school-wide equity practices you anticipate at your school to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence?	Same literature as IQ1-IQ6
RQ 2 = How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the barriers they encounter as they address school-wide equity practices to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence practices at their school?	IQ8. Based on your experience, what barriers have you encountered while addressing school-wide equity practices to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school?	Alvarez, 2019; Arias, 2009; Banks, 2014; Bochenek & Brown, 2001; Brown, 2013; Bustamante et al., 2009; Braddock, 1980; Braddock & McPartland, 1982; Cambron-McCabe, 2006; CampbellJones et al., 2010; Chapman & Ainscow, 2019; Constantine & Blackmon, 2002; Dawkins, 1983; Dantley & Tillman, 2006; Darling-Hammond et al., 2016; Denevi and Richards, 2009; Diversity in leadership, 2018; Dymond et al., 2008; Ford, 2017; Frankenberg et al., 2003; Futrell, 2004; Goehring-Juhasz, 2019; Harris et al., 2013; Jefferson, 2015; Jóhannesson, 2006; KidsCount, 2020; Kotter, 2012; Krüger & Yorke 2010; Kyriakides et al, 2019; Lindsey et al., 2018; López Sánchez et al., 2008; McCrimmon, 2004; Mitchell, 2016; Mitchell, D., 2018; Monyeki et al., 2013; Moreno et al., 2014; National School Boards Association, 2018; Ravitch,
	IQ9. Based on your experience are there any other barriers to school-wide equity practices to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural	

	competence at your school that you have yet to mention and would like to?	2009; Rodríguez-Mena & Sánchez. 2017; Romney et al., 2008; Rowley & McNeill, 2017; Skrla et al., 2006; Snyder & Snyder, 1999; The Education Trust, 2006
RQ = 3 How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the leadership behaviors they utilize for school-wide equity practices to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence practices at their school?	<p>IQ10. Based on your experience, what leadership behaviors are necessary to lead independent school-wide equity practices designed to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence?</p> <p>IQ11. Based on your experience are there any other leadership behaviors necessary to lead independent school-wide equity practices designed to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school that you have yet to mention and would like to?</p>	<p>Arias, 2009; Alinsunurin, 2020; Ashkansays & Tse, 2000; Baal, 2011; Bandura, 1986; Banks, 2014; Banks & McGee-Banks, 2019; Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Bass, 1985; Bass et al., 2003; Bass & Avolio, 1995; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Blackmore, 2002; Branch, 2019; Brown, 2004; Brown, 2006; Burke, 2014; Burns, 1978; Capper & Young, 2007; Chin & Trimble, 2015; Ciulla, 2004; Cochran-Smith, 1998; Cramp, 2010; Cross et al., 1989; Cruddas, 2007; Daniels, 2011; Danielson, 2002; Davies, 2007; Davies, 2009; Davis, 2012; Day et al., 2007; Devnvi & Richards, 2012; DiPaola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Easton et al., 2008; EDEquity, 2006; Edmunds & Macmillan, 2010; Fink & Resnick, 2001; Flamini, 2010; Ford, 2017; Frost, 2008; Gardner & Stough, 2002; Garza et al., 2004; Goleman, 1995; Gurr & Day, 2014; Hallinger, 2003; Harper, D., 2016; Harris, 2004; Houghton et al., 2012; Howden, 2018; Hunt & Goetz, 1997; Jordan & Troth, 2004; Joseph et al., 2015; Kaufman, 2003; Kerr et al., 2006; Larson & Ovando, 2001; Leban and Zulauf, 2004; Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2009; Leithwood and Jantzi, 2006; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Leithwood & Sun, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2007; Lindsey et al., 2018; Linton, 2011; Linton, 2013; Sergiovanni, 2001; MacBeath & Dempster, 2009; Maqubela, 2016; Marshall C., 1995; ; Marzano et al., 2001; Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Merchant et al., 2012; Mills & Boardley, 2016; Miron, 1996; Mitchell, 2016; Muhammad, 2009; Mullen et al., 2019; Nunnally et al., 2003; Oakes et al., 2000; Paglis & Green, 2002; Palmer et al., 2001; Podsakoff et al., 2004; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009; Sahlberg, 2011; Rapp et al., 2001; Roberts & Pruitt, 2003; Ryczek, 2018; Saitis & Saiti, 2018; Sands et al., 2000; Scheurich, 1998; Scheurich & Skrla, 2003; Scott et al., 2013; Singleton, 2015; Sivanathan & Fekken, 2002; Skrla et al., 2006; Stoll & Louis, 2007; Wahab et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2016; Warschauer et al., 2004; Williams, 2008; Zacarro et al., 2004; Zollers et al., 1999</p>

APPENDIX E

Interview Protocol Script

Thank you again for participating in this interview. I am conducting a research study that examines the descriptions of Heads' perspectives on school-wide equity practices, barriers encountered, and leadership behaviors necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school.

A school-wide equity practice may be anything that can be manipulated by your leadership and position (i.e., practices, programs, policies, services, drives, structures, curriculum, personnel) within your community.

Diversity may be any school-wide equity practice that accommodate race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender identity and expression, sex, sexual orientation, religion, ableness (abilities/disabilities), immigration status, language, family structure, and alternative lifestyles. Still, it is in no way limited to just these demographics/populations but rather your interpretation of equity, diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school.

A constituent may be any of the following groups, but not limited to: the Board, administration, teachers, faculty, students, parents, and families.

A leadership behavior is any quality, trait, characteristic, attribute, or specific action demonstrated by you.

You have been invited to participate because of your status as Head of school, or position equivalent at one of the LAIS, CAIS, or NAIS exemplary independent schools in southern California in regards to school-wide equity practices. You have been in your position for at least three years. The study's findings will be published, as they may provide the independent educational community with further insight on educational equity.

This interview should last no more than an hour, starting first with six demographic questions and then 11 interview questions related to your specific experiences to school wide equity practices, barriers and leadership behaviors at your school. There are naturally planned follow-up questions to probe further detail.

I will be recording the interview through zoom and then transcribing the audio through Otter.ai with your permission. I will be the only person with access to the transcription. After I have transcribed the recording, it will be cleared of any personal or institutional identifying information. After removing the transcriptions of any identifying information, if you would like a copy of the transcription, I can send a copy.

Before we begin, I would like to give you a friendly reminder that your participation is entirely voluntary. You may decide not to participate and may withdraw your participation at any time before, during, or after the interview. No explanation is necessary, and there will be no penalty to your or your institution if you choose to withdraw.

Do you have any questions you'd like to ask before the interview begins?

Demographic Questions of Participant/Participants School	
How many years of experience do you have in your position as Head of school?	
What is your current age?	
What gender do you identify by?	
What type of school is your institution?	
What is the grade range of your school?	
How many students are enrolled in your school?	

Research Questions (RQ)	Corresponding Interview Questions (IQ)	Follow-up Interview Questions (FIQ)
RQ 1 = How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the school-wide equity practices they utilize to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at their school?	IQ1. What financially raised or funded school-wide equity practices such as scholarships, capital campaigns or fundraisers do your school have to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence?	FIQ1. Why were X,Y, Z, etc. (school-wide equity practices stated) adopted and how do they achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school? FIQ2. Do you anticipate any new financially raised or funded school-wide equity practice for the future in order to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school?
RQ1	IQ2. What structural school-wide equity practices such as your school's mission, philosophy, and physical plant do your school have to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence?	FIQ1. Why were X,Y, Z, etc. (school-wide equity practices stated) adopted and how do they achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school? FIQ2. Do you anticipate any newly adopted structural school-wide equity practices such as your school's mission, philosophy, and physical plant for the future necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school?
RQ1	IQ3. What school-wide equity practices, such as constituency diversity and constituency knowledge/expertise, do your	FIQ1. Why were X,Y, Z, etc. (school-wide equity practices stated) adopted and how do they achieve diversity, inclusion, and

	school have to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence?	cultural competence at your school? FIQ2. Do you anticipate any changes to school-wide equity practices such as constituency diversity and constituency knowledge/expertise for the future necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school?
RQ1	IQ4. What school-wide equity practices such as curriculum and instruction aspects do your school have to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence?	FIQ1. Why were X,Y, Z, etc. (school-wide equity practices stated) adopted and how do they achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school? FIQ2. Do you anticipate any changes to school-wide equity practices such as curriculum and instruction aspects for the future necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school?
RQ1	IQ5. What school-wide equity practices such as community-based partnerships, programs, and PD's do your school promote or sponsor to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence?	FIQ1. Why were X,Y, Z, etc. (school-wide equity practices stated) adopted and how do they achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school? FIQ2. Do you anticipate any newly promoted or sponsored school-wide equity practices such as community-based partnerships, programs, or PD's in the future necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school?
RQ1	IQ6. What school-wide equity practices such as institutional awareness or support, aka identifiable need, do your school have to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence?	FIQ1. Why were X,Y, Z, etc. (school-wide equity practices stated) adopted and how do they achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school? FIQ2. Do you anticipate any newly adopted school-wide equity practice such as institutional awareness or support (identifiable need) in the future necessary to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school?
RQ1	IQ7. Are there any other school-	FIQ1. Why were X,Y, Z, etc.

	<p>wide equity practices that you have yet to mention or are there any other school-wide equity practices you anticipate at your school to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence?</p>	<p>(school-wide equity practices stated) adopted and how do they achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school?</p> <p>Or</p> <p>FIQ1. Why do you believe X,Y, Z, etc. (school-wide equity practice stated) will be adopted and how does it achieve diversity, inclusion and cultural competence at your school?</p>
<p>RQ 2 = How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the barriers they encounter as they address school-wide equity practices to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence practices at their school?</p>	<p>IQ8. Based on your experience, what barriers have you encountered while addressing school-wide equity practices to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school?</p>	<p>FIQ1. Why were X,Y,Z, etc (barriers stated) barriers to achieving diversity, inclusion and cultural competence at your school and how did you overcome it?</p> <p>FIQ2. If you haven't overcome X,Y,Z, etc (barriers stated) barriers yet, how do you plan on addressing it?</p>
<p>RQ 2</p>	<p>IQ9. Based on your experience are there any other barriers to school-wide equity practices to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school that you have yet to mention and would like to?</p>	<p>FIQ1. Why were X,Y,Z, etc (barriers stated) barriers to achieving diversity, inclusion and cultural competence at your school and how did you overcome it?</p> <p>FIQ2. If you haven't overcome X,Y,Z, etc (barriers stated) barriers yet, how do you plan on addressing it?</p>
<p>RQ 3 = How do Heads of independent schools in Southern California describe the leadership behaviors they utilize for school-wide equity practices to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence practices at their school?</p>	<p>IQ10. Based on your experience, what leadership behaviors are necessary to lead independent school-wide equity practices designed to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence?</p>	<p>FIQ1. How and why are X,Y,Z, etc (leadership behaviors stated) necessary to lead independent school-wide equity practices designed to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence?</p>
<p>RQ 3</p>	<p>IQ11. Based on your experience, are there any other leadership behaviors necessary to lead independent school-wide equity practices designed to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence at your school that you have yet to mention and would like to?</p>	<p>FIQ1. How and why are X,Y,Z, etc (leadership behaviors stated) necessary to lead independent school-wide equity practices designed to achieve diversity, inclusion, and cultural competence?</p>