

## **Associations Between Principals of Color and Recruiting Teachers of Color In New Jersey Schools**

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### **Abstract**

To achieve equity, there is a need to recognize that both White educators and educators of color can add values and perspectives to the conversation (Singleton & Linton, 2006). Despite of a large number of studies on social justice, there is a scarcity of studies on how principals of color enact social justice leadership and what are the possible associations between principals of color and the recruitment of the teachers of color in order to promote social justice. Using the mixed research method—sequential exploratory design, this study suggests that school districts consider hiring more administrators of color to create a culture within their school district where students of color feel more of a sense of belonging and empowerment.

### **Key Words**

principals of color, teachers of color, students of color, inclusiveness; social justice, equity and equality, sequential exploratory research method

## Introduction

Increases in the population of students of color have posed great challenges for American schools and in particular those that are encountering language barriers, cultural differences, high dropout rates, constant suspensions, unwanted pregnancy, low academic performance, etc. Meanwhile, many teachers of color enter the profession with an orientation towards justice and equity (Kohli & Pizarro, 2016), who have personal experiences with culturally disconnected curricula, under-resourced school conditions, and high percentage of disadvantaged students (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012).

Having been aware of educational injustice and racism, those teachers still choose teaching as their careers because they intend to improve the academic achievement of all students, including students of color (Irizarry & Donaldson, 2012), to support the educational transformation of their local community (Dingus, 2008), and to serve as racial justice advocates. While statistics show that students of color comprised of almost 50% of the population in public schools, yet there was only 18% of teachers of color and 22% of administrators of colors in American public schools (Kohli & Pizarro, 2016).

To achieve equity, there is a need to recognize that both White educators and educators of color can add values and perspectives to the conversation (Singleton & Linton, 2006). Despite of a large number of studies on social justice, there is a scarcity on how principals of color enact social justice leadership and what are the possible associations between principals of color and the recruitment of teachers of color in the name of promoting social justice. Two research questions are central to this study:

- 1) What do school principals of color do to promote social justice in school?
- 2) Are there any associations between principals of color and the recruitment of the teachers of color in New Jersey schools?

## Literature Review

In the research literature, people of color have been loosely used to refer to various ethnic and race groups, such as those who are Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska natives, or any other ethnic groups who are not White. In this study, we definite “people of color” as being non-white, non-European descents.

### Principals of color, diversity, inclusion in schools

Historically, principals of color have been members of the underprivileged in the United States. Research indicates that those groups of principals have approached educational leadership through their own experiences and have rendered the leadership practice qualitatively different from their mainstream peers (Aleman, 2009; McGee Banks, 2001, 2007; Santamaria & Santamaria, 2012; Tillman, 2007).

Marginalized educational experiences are very likely for principals of color to promote multiculturalism, social justice and equity (Santamaria, 2013). As a result, they tend to challenge assumptions about how schools function, strategize, and operationalize teaching and learning (Thomas & Ely, 1996).

Much research has identified the importance of school leadership and management as essential forces to achieve diversity (For example, Furman, 2012; Khalifa,

Gooden, & Davis, 2016; Ryan, 2006; Santamaria, 2013). Khalifa et al. (2016), reviewing 436 journal articles, books and chapters, suggested school leaders actively promote responsive school culture that emphasizes diversity and inclusiveness of teachers and students. In doing so, they think that teachers and students of color feel included and appreciated.

Due to their backgrounds and minority status, principals of color are aware of pressed social justice issues in schools, in local communities and in national context. They have possessed comprehensive views on and knowledge of socially injustice issues, and are willing to strive toward diversity, to bridge divides, to close gaps, and to speak up on behalf of teachers and students (For example, Cooper, 2009; Dimmock & Walker, 2000; Fuller, 2012; Khalifa et al., 2016).

### **Teachers of color and social justice**

Using the theories of ontologies (way of being), epistemologies (way of knowing), and axiologies (ethics) as its framework, Kohli and Pizarro (2016) argue that teachers of color “seek and need relational ways of being in their work that honors their own families and communities through the success of their students” (p.75).

In their studies, teachers of colors felt they had deep ties and connections with their communities and they were responsible to challenge the status quo and promote social justice through their teaching and instructions in classrooms. They were passionate to transform schools for students of color and presented “a relational commitment” in their teaching.

Historically, public school teachers in the United States have been dominated by European Americans with 83% White, along

with 80% White school principals (U.S. Department of Education, 2015), which shows that the demographics of teachers and principals haven’t matched that of their students. It is problematic and inevitably unable to meet the needs and demands of diverse student population. Much research has shown that ethnically diverse teaching forces have greater potentials to bring more critical, sociopolitical consciousness to classrooms (Borrero, Flores, & Cruz, 2016; Boutte & Jackson, 2013; Jackson, 2011; Rios & Montecinos, 1999).

For example, teachers of color have experienced racism, social injustice, and ethnic oppression sometime in their lives and may better understand students of color. They are capable of providing alternative perspectives on curricula, pedagogy, and schooling and are likely to challenge the system that has oppressed marginalized communities (Borrero, et al., 2016; Carrasco, Vera, & Cazden, 1981; Duncan-Andrade, 2007; Kohli, 2012; Meier, Stewart, & England, 1989; Nieto, 2002; Sleeter, 1993).

In addition, teachers of color can serve as role models for students of color, which could encourage students to follow their footsteps and motivate students to make efforts toward academic and career success (Borrero, et al., 2016; Dee, 2005; Villegas, Strom, & Lucas, 2012).

It is understandable that the demographic matching alone doesn’t guarantee a better schooling and ultimate success for students. It is what teachers of color bring into the profession, what they present in classrooms, and how they approach justice and equity.

Though research has emphasized their important roles (For example, Borrero, et al., 2016; Kohli & Pizarro, 2016; Kohli, 2012),

teachers of color have continued to be under-represented in schools, districts and teacher preparation programs (Kohli & Pizarro, 2016; Sleeter, Vonne, & Kumashiro, 2014; Sleeter, 2001). Even worse, research shows that teachers of color leave the profession 24% higher than their White counterparts per year (Ingersoll & May, 2011; Kohli & Pizarro, 2016). Thus, it is necessary to recruit and retain more teachers of color in schools, in particular those with high percentages of students of color.

### Methodology

This research used the sequential exploratory design, which “involves a first phase of qualitative data collection and analysis, followed by a second phase of quantitative data collection and analysis that builds on the results of the first qualitative phase” (Creswell, 2009, p. 211).

It included both in-depth interviews and statistical analyses that were separately conducted but connected.

### Research design

The sequential exploratory design is a mixed research method that “used quantitative data and results to assist in the interpretation of qualitative findings ... to initially explore a

phenomenon” (Creswell, 2009, p. 211). Such a design avails researchers to fully understand the complexity of the scenarios, issues, and problems that are intended to be investigated in this study.

### Qualitative

Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were used to obtain specific and story-telling data to establish a basic level of potential emergent themes and to extract a phenomenon of interest and bring the unexpected to emerge (Lockmiller & Lester, 2017).

The interview questions were adopted from the International School Leadership Development Network (SLDN) sponsored by the British Educational Leadership, Management, and Administration Society (BELMAS) and the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), which was to gauge principals’ perceptions of social justice, and what they have done to promote it in their schools.

The researchers used networking for convenience sampling (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996), and recruited 10 principals of color who agreed to be interviewed. Six out of ten principals of elementary schools were finalized and Table 1 provided their backgrounds and demographics information.

Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics of Principals in Interviews*

<b>Principals (pseudonyms)</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Years of being P</b>	<b>School location</b>	<b>School level (grades)</b>	<b>Student population</b>
Decker	M	In 40's	African American	3	Urban	PreK-8	336
Rhodes	M	In 40's	Hispanic	9	Urban	1 <sup>st</sup> -3 <sup>rd</sup>	361
September	M	In late 50's	African American	26	Urban	Pre-8	690
Shape	M	In 30's	African	2	Urban	PreK-8	680
Nicholson	M	In late 40's	Hispanic	12	Urban	PreK-8	457
Phelps	F	In 30's	Hispanic	3	Urban	4 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup>	450

**Quantitative**

The quantitative data were retrieved from the New Jersey Department of Education (DOE), which was available to the public. The DOE provided the data of all districts in the state, including student enrollment, student dropouts, certificated and non-certificated personnel, graduation rates, teacher evaluation, school performance, assessment and special education. The state required that all school districts report the data of the individuals who were employed

and be then disaggregated by the categories of race/ethnicity and gender.

This study used the 2016-2017 data of the administrators of color, full-time teachers of color, and students in New Jersey public school districts, including (1) school administrators of color (ADMIN); (2) teachers of color (TEACH); (3) economically disadvantaged students (ECON); (4) students with a 504 plan

(FIVE); and (5) students with the limited English proficiency (LEP).

**Analytic Approach**

According to the sequential exploratory research design (Creswell, 2009), qualitative results are analyzed prior to the quantity data collected and analyzed.

In the event that some unexpected themes arose in the qualitative results, the quantity analysis can be useful to “generalize qualitative findings to different samples” (Creswell, 2009, p. 211).

**Qualitative**

Following such a protocol, interviews were conducted lasting approximately 60 minutes, each of which was digitally recorded. From verbatim transcriptions, the data were then coded. In the coding process, researchers employed domain, taxonomic, and componential analysis methodology to discover identical patterns, common themes, and controversial issues (Spradley, 1980). Table 2 shows examples of the analysis process. The interviews of this study allowed researchers to identify themes and provide the answers to the research questions.

Table 2

*Process of Coding*

Codes	Conceptual categories	Theme
I am a role model, and made impression on them	Modeling	What do Principals of Color do
I model as often, as much, as possible		
I am a servant leader, and will do it first		
I model it for teachers		
I trust you, and need you to trust me	trust & relationship building	
I believe relationship		
You plant seeds, and are then back away...they are going to spark		
I go to churches myself	reach out to local community	
I want them to know what my vision and goals are for this school		
getting the words out to the community		

## Quantitative

To validate and generalize the findings from the interviews, researchers employed the multiple regression analysis, which is a statistical technique generally used to predict the value of a dependent variable based on the values of two or more independent variables (UCLA IDRE, 2018). While teachers of color (TEACH) was the dependent variable in this study, school administrators of color (ADMIN) was the independent variable, controlled by variables of economically disadvantaged students (ECON), students with a 504 plan (FIVE), and students with the limited English proficiency (LEP). The multi-regression test used in this study was to predict the dependent variable (TEACH) that may be associated with independent variables of ADMIN, controlled by ECON, FIVE, and LEP.

## Findings

### Qualitative analysis

Six principals of color who participated in the study worked in urban public schools in New Jersey. The six schools where they worked were small to mid-size elementary schools ranging from Pre-K to Grade 8<sup>th</sup> with the student population below 700. All six principals had been in their positions for more than two years, with three were Hispanic and three African American. Their ages ranged from the early 30's to the late 50's—two principals were in their 30's, three in the 40's, and one in his 50's (see Table 1).

Building trust is a key to the success of an organization, which is especially true in schools, where there should be trust between administrators and teachers, between administrators and students, between teachers and students, between teachers, and between students. Four out of six interviewed principals emphasized its importance for trust building. Such a trust relationship can be achieved through their interactions with teachers and students, as the interpersonal trust and respect

are fundamental for social justice leadership. They believed when principals committed to the success of teachers and students, trust is being developed.

In particular, principals in this study described how they built the trust with teachers to create a culture of inclusiveness in their schools. Knowing that they are part of it empowers teachers to believe they can eventually make a difference in school.

This was an approach that Principal Decker took on how one teacher became trusting of him in his school:

*... for example, a teacher did something last week and I was like, why didn't you tell me first before doing it. But I knew why. She didn't trust me. She trusted someone else, but they didn't give her what she wanted. And I told her "you should have told me," and she said, "That's what everyone told me that I should have listened to you." Now she knows she should trust me.*  
(Principal Decker)

It's apparent that it took some time for this teacher to realize that she should have trusted Principal Decker. If leaders don't make efforts to develop relationships with their teachers, teachers may not buy-in their school visions and missions. Relationship building between school leaders and teachers was one recurring theme during interviews.

When asking how she managed to pertain to getting teachers involved, Principal Phelps stated:

*What happens here is that there are growing teachers who are taking opportunities and taking*

*on leadership roles, which would not happen in the past. We have one teacher who led the African American reading last year when she wasn't sure if it's OK. I re-assured her it's even better and go for it. That's exactly what you have to do if you have teachers who are passionate. As a leader, you see a spark after you've planted the seed. Let them go and they're going to make it happen.*  
(Principal Phelps)

What Principal Phelps did demonstrates her trust in teachers by empowerment. She gained teachers' trust and made them feel comfortable to contact her without hesitation whenever needed. Clearly, she had developed strong relationships with the teachers in her schools.

Modeling was another major approach that the interviewed principals had taken, and four out of six principals thought it effective in promoting social justice. Modeling reflects how to translate what people say to what they believe. It is even more powerful when people see what their leaders do and how they do it. For schools to promote a socially just environment, school principals' knowledge, skills, and dispositions are indicators to teachers and students as to what kinds of values their principals and schools endorse.

Principal Rhodes said this, when he dealt with a student who was about to be sent back home by his teacher.

*So, for me, to model it for teachers, and to get them to understand it's not about sending that kid home. It's about having*

*that conversation, and it's about working with that student to be more resilient. It is about building that relationship with students. And I hope they [teachers] can handle it differently next time. It is also about building relationships with families, so that they [teachers] are comfortable having those conversations with parents.*  
(Principal Rhodes)

Along with developing relationships with teachers and students in schools, participating principals also initiated building relationships with local communities to promote social justice as a whole. Schools in the United States are in general funded by local communities, and the local taxpayers should know what the school is doing, how their children are doing in school, and how they can get involved. Principal Shape stated several times in the interview that “we need to get out into the community.”

With the increasing immigrant population from Burma and Vietnam in his district, Principal Shape took initiatives to connect with local churches and activists. Here is how he approached his local communities and why he needed to do it:

*I want them to know who I am and what my vision and goals are for this school. Periodically, I'll go out to the churches myself. As a matter of fact, every year our district sets up a schedule and we all go out, which is around in January or February. All administrators get together and go to a local church that's down*



*the road. It's a big church we go  
there and we visit it every year,  
just let them know who we are  
and what we're trying to do.*  
(Principal Shape)

As the school and community relationship is revealed in practice, the local culture in each community seems to influence expectations of school leadership; at the same time, principals can use leadership practices to challenge prevailing norms in their communities to some degree. Principals in this study realized that getting the word out about their schools was equally important to the relationship building, which was a critical step that may help change the culture of local community.

#### **Quantitative analyses**

With the data retrieved from the New Jersey Department of Education, 653 out of 686 school districts that met the criteria were used

for this study, including 2,500 schools, 116,412 full-time teachers, and almost 1.4 million students from public and charter schools. To investigate whether there is a relationship between administrators of color (ADMIN) and the percentage of teachers of color (TEACH) in a school district, a regression test was conducted for qualified districts (N = 653), controlled by variables of ECON, FIVE, and LEP (see Table 3).

The results show that the relationship at the .001 ( $p < .001$ ) level is statistically significant, indicating while there are more administrators of color in leadership positions in a school district, there are more teachers of color in the same district. When controlled by the percentage of economically disadvantaged students and students with a 504 plan, the results are still statistically significant, though indicating a relatively low prediction of such associations.

Table 3

*Relationship Between Administrators of & Teachers of Color in NJ*

(N = 653)						
TEACH	REG-1	REG-2	REG-3	REG-4	REG-5	REG-6
ADMIN	(.469) .000***	(.379) .000***	(.379) .000***	(.379) .000***	(.375) .000***	(.376) .000***
ECON		(.161) .000***	(.162) .000***	(.162) .000***	(.163) .000***	(.163) .000***
WHT			(.001) .920	(.000) .944	(-.006) .621	(-.002) .874
IEP				(.015) .642	(.019) .558	(.021) .514
FIVE					(.306) .005**	(.305) .005**
LEP						(.071) .258
Constant	4.307	0.37	0.295	0.063	-0.449	-0.965

\*Coefficients in parenthesis; p Values underneath

\*\* p<.05\* p<.01\*\* p<.001\*\*\*

To investigate further whether there is a relationship between administrators of color (ADMIN) and teachers of color (TEACH) in a school district with 60% or higher of economic disadvantaged students (ECON), the regression was conducted in the selected districts (N = 121) (see Table 4).

The results show that the relationship at the .001 (p< .001) level is statistically significant, indicating while there are more administrators of color in leadership positions in a school district with 60% or higher of the ECON students, there are more teachers of color in the same district.

The regression results also show a statistical significance at the .05 level between teachers of color and ECON students, indicating that, while there are more

economically disadvantaged students in a school, there are more teachers of color hired in the same district.

Table 4

*Relationship Between Administrators of & Teachers of Color in NJ*

(N = 121;  $\geq$  60% Economically Disadvantaged Students)

TEACH	REG-1	REG-2	REG-3	REG-4	REG-5	REG-6
ADMIN	(.412) .000***	(.405) .000***	(.404) .000***	(.403) .000***	(.399) .000***	(.387) .000***
ECON		(.313) .025*	(.314) .025*	(.317) .028*	(.319) .027*	(.342) .018*
WHT			(.009) .847	(.009) .855	(.000) .999	(-.030) .581
IEP				(.017) .915	(.000) 1.000	(-.001) .995
FIVE					(.273) .188	(.269) .193
LEP						(-.596) .180
Constant	14.342	-9.939	-10.542	-11.031	-11.035	-9.159

\*Coefficients in parenthesis; p Values underneath)

\*\* p<.05\* p<.01\*\* p<.001\*\*\*

To a district with 40% or less of the economic disadvantaged students, a regression was conducted in selected districts (N = 434) (see Table 5). The results show that the relationship at the .001 ( $p < .001$ ) level is statistically significant, indicating while there

are more administrators of color in leadership positions in a school district with 40% or less of the ECON students, there are more teachers of color in the same district. The results also show a statistical significance at the .01 level between teachers of color and the students with

limited English proficiency (LEP), indicating that, while there are more limited English

proficiency students in a school, there are more teachers of color hired in the same district.

Table 5

*Relationship Between Administrators of & Teachers of Color in NJ)*

(N = 434;  $\leq$  40% Economically Disadvantaged Students)

TEACH	REG-1	REG-2	REG-3	REG-4	REG-5	REG-6
ADMIN	(.246) .000***	(.241) 000***	(.242) 000***	(.239) 000***	(.239) 000***	(.234) 000***
ECON		(.047) .123	(.046) .131	(.045) .144	(.045) .141	(.043) .159
WHT			(-.003) .761	(-.002) .826	(-.003) .775	(.006) .615
IEP				(-.031) .279	(-.030) .298	(-.027) .353
FIVE					(.038) .806	(.006) .967
LEP						(.150) .007**
Constant	4.018	3.32	3.526	4.027	3.946	3.004

\*Coefficients in parenthesis; p Values underneath

\*\* p<.05 \* p<.01 \*\* p<.001\*\*\*

## Discussions and Conclusion

Research has long shown that teachers of color can play key roles in reducing racial discrimination in schools challenging the oppression of marginalized communities (Meier, Stewart, & England, 1989; Sleeter, 1993). Quite often, these teachers have experienced racism and ethnic oppressions themselves, and are capable of building relationships with students who have the similar experiences (Borrero, Flores, & Cruz, 2016). They are able to work with students of color by means of critically examining social inequities and their impacts on schooling (Boutte & Jackson, 2013; Camangian, 2013; Duncan-Andrade, 2009).

The results of this study—based on a mixed sequential exploratory research methodology—shed light on a phenomenon where administrators of color can be a potential factor to attract more teachers of color, as is discussed in this section. For the purpose of this study, the term of the administrators of color is interchangeable with the principals of color, as principals are a major force in a school administration.

## The Role of Principals of Color for Social Justice

Many scholars in the education field are exploring the role of educators of color, the nature of education for social justice, and the implications of ways to improve the education experiences of students of color (Borrero, Flores, & Cruz, 2016; Fuller, 2012; Howley, Woodrum, Burgess, & Rhodes, 2009; Irizarry, & Donaldson, 2012; Johnson, 2007; Khalifa, et al., 2016; Kohli & Pizarro, 2016; Ryan, 2006; Santamaria, 2013; Scheurich, & Skrla, 2003; Singleton, & Linton, 2006; Tatum, & Muhammad, 2012), and those principals for social justice “cultivated trust and gained community support” (Howley, et al., 2009,

p.12). The qualitative results of this study indicate such an approach. Four out of six principals in this study emphasized the importance of trust building with teachers and gaining the community support, believing it should be based on honest conversations, relationship building, and constant modeling. Principals in this study modeled inclusive and socially just ideologies through conversations with teachers and through their own actions and behaviors in schools.

With global migration, economic downturns, and terrorism threats, more immigrants are coming to western countries including the United States, which has shifted the demographics and numbers of school-age children of color attending public schools. Today’s elementary and secondary school students in the United States are more diverse, racially and by origin, than 20 years ago (The Pew Research Center, 2018).

The enrollment of students who are White decreased from 59 to 50 percent from 2003 to 2013 and was projected to continue to decline through fall 2027 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Meanwhile, the continuing onslaught of external mandates from the federal and state governments has demanded increasing learning outcomes for *ALL* students, requiring that school leaders acknowledge the differences among students and create positive learning environments for all students, including students with diverse backgrounds.

School principals have responsibilities for setting directions, supervising curricula, advancing improvements, and increasing student achievements in school (Diamond & Spillane, 2016; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Harris & DeFlaminis, 2016; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Muijs & Harris, 2002).

However, schools seemed not to be fulfilling the expectations of parents and taxpayers (e.g. Johnson, 2006; Tatum & Muhammad, 2012), in particular, the expectations of the parents of students of color.

Such a phenomenon warrants some discussions to diversify school administrators and teachers for the purpose of improving student learning outcomes.

Shields (2004) pointed out more than a decade ago, “When children feel they belong and find their realities reflected in curricula and conversations of schooling, they are more engaged in learning and that they experience greater school success” (p.122).

Thus, it is important for school leaders to develop a school culture that is socially just, deeply understood, and critically examined for its adherence to diversity and inclusiveness. More teachers of color in schools and classrooms can help develop such a phenomenon, and the quantitative results of this study echo it.

### **Important Roles of Teachers of Color**

The statistical results of this study show that while the more principals of color are in a New Jersey district, there are more teachers of color in the same district, in particular, in those districts that have the students with economically disadvantaged backgrounds, 504 plans and limited English proficiency.

While many teachers of color enter the profession with a focus on justice and equity (Hillard, Perry, & Steele, 2003; Kohli & Pizarro, 2016), research has indicated that these teachers are often likely to integrate social justice consciousness into their classroom teaching and instructions (Borrero, Flores, & Cruz, 2016; Boutte & Jackson, 2013; Jackson, 2011; Rios & Montecinos, 1999).

Research also shows that “students of color benefit when teachers who share their ethnic backgrounds and experiences teach them” (Borrero, Flores, & Cruz, 2016, p.28).

Principals in this study narrated they tried to set good examples for their students, because they strongly believed they could be role models for their students, as Principal Decker shared:

*I’m a role model. I saw a student who was already in High School. She was telling me how much she missed me when I left her. I know I made an impression on her... And that’s my job—to make an impression upon them [students]. That’s what I want to do. I dress like this every day—suit and tie. So when they see me looking like this, they tell me “You smell good”. I will say I took a bath today and then joked: “Tuesday is bath day and that’s why I smell good.” They all laughed. I’m just always trying to make an impression on them that they can be like me. (Principal Decker)*

Having seen what their principals do and observed how they behave and act in daily school practices, students are motivated and encouraged to be like their role models (Borrero, Flores, & Cruz, 2016; Dee, 2005; Villegas, Strom, & Lucas, 2012).

At the same time, students of color believe that principals and teachers who have the same backgrounds and experiences are able to understand them better, considering themselves included. We then argue students of color learn better and their academic performances can be improved in such an

environment. On the contrary, when they feel left out or marginalized, students may act out or shut themselves down, which will have negative effects on their academic performances and achievements.

The literature indicates that it is empirical to match students of color with teachers of color in order for schools to successfully improve the academic achievements for all students (Lindsay & Hart, 2016).

Though the statistical results of this study didn't show that schools and districts in New Jersey intentionally did the matching, it is reasonable to assume that the shared school missions of justice and equity among educators of color bring them together.

The principals of color with the life experiences of social justice are very likely to attract alike-minded individuals who share a collective and similar experiences, and vice versa. Teachers of color recognize that their passions could be understood and supported by principals of color when both have been in historically underserved communities.

Though the results of this study didn't provide the evidence that principals of color directly impact the percentage of teachers of color in school districts, the literature indicates the importance of race matching between students and teachers concerning students' academic achievements and disciplines (Lindsay & Hart, 2016; Wright, 2015; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997).

We then argue that principals of color recognize the need of teachers of color in classrooms, while teachers of color see the needs to address social injustices and racism

when interacting with students, which can be materialized in their teaching, disciplining and mentoring.

## Conclusion

What is clear is the impact of social justice teaching on students, particularly students of color. Research suggests that using curricula and instructions that are explicit about race and the impact of racism in schools and society promotes school cultures, in which students of color feel more of a sense of belonging and empowerment (French & Simmons, 2015).

While more study is needed to quantify what teaching and education through the lens of social justice mean for non-white and white students alike, this study recommends that school districts consider hiring more educators of color to benefit all students' academic learning and achievements at large.

## Future Research

The findings of this study show important implications for policy makers, educational researchers, and school administrators with regard to the important roles of educators of color in improving the academic performances of students of color and the possible associations between principals of color and the recruitments of teachers of color.

In addition to the important findings in this study, future research would surely prove beneficial in learning how others, such as teachers of and students of color, perceive social justice in school and how they view the possible associations between administrators of and teachers of color in improving student learning.

Though the results of this study show, while there are more principals of color in a district, there are more teachers of

color in the same district, there is a limited empirical evidence to show whether principals of color are the factor that directly impacts the recruitment of the teachers of color. The association of the two warrants the attention of the future research.

The goal of this study was to examine the roles of educators of color. Though a mixed research methodology provided more holistic findings by both qualitative and quantitative

analyses, the sample size of six interviewees from elementary schools might be weak because the convenience sampling might not be representative (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996) and the perspectives from participating principals of color might not be very diverse.

The future research may expand it to recruit more participants from middle and high schools.

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