

**Principals of Color: Leading from the Collective *We***

**Ashton R. Cooper**

**Pamela S. Angelle**

**The University of Tennessee**

Contact information

**Ashton R. Cooper**

Graduate Research Assistant

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

Claxton 326

Knoxville, TN 37996

[acoop37@vols.utk.edu](mailto:acoop37@vols.utk.edu)

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## **Principals of Color: Leading from the Collective *We***

The macro discourse of schooling today centers on the market economy for education; that is, the neo-liberal view of competition for students based on which school can offer the greatest value. That value is measured by standardized test scores for the most part. Thus, the prevailing view is to place the merit of schools on the child's increased productivity. By failing to focus on the whole child, this discourse privileges some children at the expense of others.

The marginalized students who have been historically overlooked are the faces of poverty, disability, English language learners, and cultural and ethnic difference. Students who have been traditionally marginalized, not only by the system in which they are schooled, but also by the people within the system, most need the support of a core community. Hargreaves, Earl, and Ryan (1996) (as cited in Osterman, 2000, p. 323), note that “one of the most fundamental reforms needed in secondary or high school education is to make schools into better communities of caring and support for young people” (p. 77). Building caring school communities engenders a sense of belonging in students, increases motivation, and increases a student's feeling of competence (Osterman, 2000). Principals who work to lead schools as places of care, where opportunities are provided to all children, and where socially just practices are the foundation of meeting the needs of marginalized children are the subject of this paper.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the articulations of two principals as they describe the intersection of their commitment to socially just practices in multicultural schools and the challenges they face while doing so. This study is guided by two research questions: (1) How do principals practice multicultural collective leadership? (2) How do principals lead from the collective *We*?

## **Review of Pertinent Literature**

The complexity of school organizations today require increased capacity for leadership of the many, rather than focused on one central authority figure. Delegation, shared leadership, distributed leadership and other like-minded approaches attempt to meet the demand for social capital in schools. Extant literature has noted that leadership in recent decades has become a more fluid process. In other words, "one could be taking on leadership roles and responsibilities in one situation or at one time and then switch to a followership role in another situation or time" (Scott, Jiang, Wildman, & Griffith, 2016, p. 2). Thus, relationships and context become more important in non-hierarchical way of leading. Establishing relationships, building networks, embracing opportunities, and a "profound commitment to the health of the whole to nurture similar commitment in others" (Senge, Hamilton, & Kania, 2015, p. 28) are hallmarks of leadership which models a collective style of leading. Moreover, the collective leader practices reflection and solves problems through conversations and co-creation, rather than reacting to problems (Senge et al., 2015).

Bordas (2016), through her work with communities of color, noted that as society has become more multicultural, a necessity for leadership is including myriad perspectives, inclusive participation, and mutual responsibility, all elements of collective leadership. Moreover, collective leadership extends beyond the notion of full participation of the collective in leading the group to also encompass the idea of serving others, networking, and social interactions across the group (Bordas, 2016; Contractor, DeChurch, Carson, Carter, & Keegan, 2012). The collective, people-centered view of leadership is particularly relevant in Latino, African American, and Native American cultures, which values collective leadership more than individual leadership (Bordas, 2001). Building a common vision and purpose from the diverse

tapestry of peoples is challenging. Yet, as Bordas (2001) noted, “within this diversity, however, a nucleus of common values [shapes] a collective identity” (p. 114).

Collective leadership is formed through community building and connections, sharing leadership responsibilities, and developing personal relationships with others (Bordas, 2001; Hiller, Dale, & Vance, 2006). Moreover, a respect for and embrace of those who came before and the lessons learned, along with a vision for what could be are at the heart of leading collectively. Thus, “leadership events are not constructed by the actions of single individuals; rather, they emerge through the interactions between agents over time” (Lichenstein et al, p. 4).

### **Conceptual Frame**

This research is framed in the work of Bordas (2012; 2016) and her study of Black, Latino, and Native American cultures, values, and ways of leading. Bordas (2012) identified leaders who embrace equity and justice as multicultural competent leaders, describing their work as “an inclusive approach and philosophy that incorporates the influences, practices and values of diverse cultures in a respectful and productive manner. This frame resonates with many cultures and encourages diverse people to actively engage, contribute, and tap their potential” (p. 8). Through her work examining the cultures and values of Black, Latino, and Native American Indian and identifying the places where the cultures and values converge, Bordas (2012) developed eight principles of collective leadership (see Table 1).

Table 1.  
Principles of Multicultural Leadership

Principle	Definition
1. <i>Sankofa</i> - Learn from the Past	To bring forward the meaningful and useful- including the values and spiritual traditions passed from previous generations--to learn from experience, and to avoid the dead ends and pitfalls of history.
2. <i>I to We</i> -From Individualism to Collective Identity	A social imperative whereby personal gain cannot be shouldered at the expense of common good, an alteration in values whereby social responsibility and looking after the common good is embraced.
3. <i>Mi Casa Es Su Casa</i> - A Spirit of Generosity	This principle reflects a sense of inclusiveness and generosity. It encapsulates a joy in sharing and implies "What I have is also yours."(p.59)
4. <i>A Leader Among Equals</i> -Community-Conferred Leadership	A leader's influence and authority come from being apart of the community and people's identification with the leader. A leader must be known as a person who cares about and serves others.
5. <i>Leaders as Guardians of Public Values</i> - A Tradition of Activism	Leadership must address the barriers that perpetuate inequity and economic discrepancy. Leadership must incorporate what is good for the whole.

6. <i>Leaders as Community Stewards</i> - Working for the Common Goal	The responsibility of leadership is that of serving the collective. It is based in involving many people, sharing power, and benefiting others.
7. <i>All My Relatives</i> - La Familia, the Village, the Tribe	The consideration of strangers as family, a mutual respect for the universality of the human condition. This is a reflection of the spiritual understanding of the universal human connection.
8. <i>Gracias</i> - Gratitude, Hope, and Forgiveness	Leadership that flows from a place of gratefulness and thanksgiving, rather than a focus on lack or needs.

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Adapted from: Bordas, J. (2012). *Salsa, Soul, and Spirit. Leadership for a Multicultural Age*. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Bordas (2016) pointed out that collective cultures are “tightly woven, integrated, and cherish group welfare and unity” (p. 62). Leadership that relies on the collective is often common in communities of color, whereas Eurocentric cultures generally practice a leadership culture that emphasizes “thinking for oneself, personal competency, being articulate, and taking charge” (Bordas 2012, p. 64). Leaders who embrace equity and justice as multicultural competencies take an inclusive approach and philosophy that incorporates the influences, practices and values of diverse cultures in a respectful and productive manner.

Bordas (2016) stated that communities of color provide a firm foundation for building inclusive environments and appreciating differences. These facets, in particular, can lead to a higher level of collaboration by encouraging equal access and urging the involvement of all diverse segments (Bordas, 2016). As America becomes more diversified, approaches to leadership will need to reflect the growing kaleidoscope of Americans. As Bordas (2012) pointed

out, “mainstream leaders must be able to use practices and approaches that are effective with the many cultures that make up the U.S. population” (p. 4). Schools should represent the diversity of the US; therefore, it is important that school leaders represent and practice leadership that speaks to these cultures as “recognizing this ideal is an opportunity to incorporate the best practices from communities of color into their repertoire and to acknowledge their promise and potential” (Bordas 2012, p. 26).

### **Methods**

This qualitative study was part of a larger research project investigating the ways in which principals articulate embedding socially just decision making and values in their daily practice. Principals from the original study were selected through purposeful sampling, based on recommendations from university professors, university doctoral students, and school and district personnel. Principals were invited to participate and were interviewed from one to two hours. Some principals participated in follow up interviews. Interview questions were open ended and included questions such as: *What is social justice leadership? What are barriers to social justice leadership? How did you learn to be a social justice leader?*

Two principal interviews were selected for analysis in this study for two reasons; (1) to examine principals of color in their work for social justice and (2) to investigate two demographically different leaders, looking for similarity and differences in their socially just practices; that is, one male and one female but both African American; one high school and one elementary school but both urban schools; one Gulf Coast US state and one mid-Atlantic state. Once respondents were chosen, original interview data were re-analyzed by the researchers through the lens of Bordas’ (2007, 2016) work on multicultural leadership.

For purposes of this paper, the initial construct in Bordas’ frame was examined. Bordas labels this the *New Social Covenant* (Bordas, 2012). While historically, humans were “driven by self-interest, competition, and acquisition” (Bordas, 2012, p. 23), the new social covenant views people as being “cooperative, collaborative, and people-oriented” (Bordas, 2012, p. 23). This construct includes three principles, specifically, *Sankofa*, *I to We*, and *Mi Casa Es Su Casa*.

Given that we will focus on the first construct, the three principles were used as a priori codes as we coded each interview. Data analysis was conducted independently by each researcher. Referred to as the “interpretive zone” (Wasser & Bresler, 1996), dual analysis of data can enrich and increase the thoughtfulness of the evaluative process. Following independent coding, we compared and researched consensus on findings.

**Sites and Participants**

Participants in this study were recommended to us by university and K12 personnel as principals who worked for social justice. When approached about participating in the study, both self-identified as socially just leaders. Table 2 outlines the demographics of both principals.

Table 2.

Site and Participant Demographics

	<b>Barry</b>	<b>Ingrid</b>
<b>Principal Experience</b>	12 years	3 years
<b>Education</b>	Ed.D.	Ed.S.
<b>School location</b>	Urban Southern US	Urban Southeastern US
<b>School type</b>	Secondary	Primary
<b>Student population</b>	1128	475
<b>Student ethnicity</b>		
<b>Caucasian</b>	41.8%	44.9%

<b>African American</b>	58.2%	40.5%
<b>Latino</b>	NR	13.9%
<b>Students economically disadvantaged</b>	65.8%	74.5%
<b>Students with disabilities</b>	7.2%	10.4%

**Barry Newman.** Gulf Coast High School is located in the southern part of the United States in the mid-sized city of Gulf Breeze. Gulf Coast High School has a diverse population of over 1100 students with almost 60% of the population African American and about 40% Caucasian. Barry, the head principal, calls the student population a classic “melting pot.” Furthermore, the zoned population for the students encompasses rural areas as well as urban sections. With children of poverty at 65.8%, students live in diverse surroundings such as on country farms and in inner city government housing projects, though a few students live in large multi-story homes. The students with disabilities population is relatively low at 7%.

Like many of the students who attend Gulf Coast High School, Barry grew up as one of the at-risk children. He credits role models in his life for guiding him to a leadership position. His parents, his high school coach and the father of one of his friends provided Barry with structure and examples to emulate. Barry firmly believes that positive examples:

were instilled in me by those people who let me know that this is what the world should be about, that we help one another, we work hard, we don't quit, we give an honest day's work for an honest day's pay, and it was those things that led me to where I am today.

Barry began his educational career as a middle school physical education teacher and coach. The assistant principal at that school encouraged Barry to further his education and gain administrative certification. Following receipt of those credentials, Barry spent over twelve

years serving in various administrative capacities and ultimately, was appointed principal of Gulf Coast High School.

**Ingrid Shipman.** Ingrid is located in a mid-Atlantic state in a metropolitan area called Valley City. Northside Elementary School serves approximately 475 students in grades K-5. The community surrounding the 100 year old school is an old, established neighbourhood, in addition to the newer government housing projects. As the community has grown, it has also become more diverse. Nonetheless, newcomers are welcomed into the community and encouraged to become involved.

The three largest Northside subgroups by ethnicity are Caucasian (44.9%), African-American (40.5%), and Latino (13.9%). With almost 75% of the student population living in poverty, Northside has been designated a US DOE Title I school and receives federal funding to support the education of these at risk children. The Hispanic student population is largely concentrated in the lower grades, K-2, and two English Language Learner instructors have been assigned to the school to assist these children and their families. Moreover, additional personnel have been assigned to accommodate students with disabilities, including a speech therapist, a resource teacher, and a school psychologist.

Ingrid began her education career in 2003, working as a lower, then upper elementary teacher. After completing a specialized leadership program in the Valley City District, Ingrid was assigned as an assistant principal, then promoted to interim head principal at Northside, when the previous principal left for medical reasons. The interim status became permanent and Ingrid's first official appointment as principal was at Northside Elementary. Ingrid admitted that leading a school was "never something that I ever sought out to do. It just kind of found me so here I am."

## Findings

Findings from this study illustrate the ways in which principals adopt multicultural leadership practices to inform how they lead their school and in the community. As we sought to understand multicultural leadership from the perspective of principals of color, we focused on the first construct of Bordas' (2012) frame, *A New Social Covenant*. Three principles are included in this construct, specifically, *Learning from the Past, From Individualism to Collective Identity*, and *A Spirit of Generosity*. Findings from the data analysis are discussed through the lens of these three principles.

### **Sankofa: Learn from the Past**

This principle connects multicultural leaders to their past, to their roots, and to an acknowledgement that their history has guided them to the leader they have become. Bordas (2012) explains the mythical bird *Sankofa* as:

One who looks backward, [and who] symbolizes African-American respect for insight and knowledge acquired from the past. A legacy of their West African ancestors, *Sankofa* reminds us that our roots ground and nourish us, hold us firm when the winds of change howl, and offer perspectives about what is lasting and significant. Although *Sankofa* rests on the foundation of the past, its feet face forward. (p. 28)

The principals in this research held a firm belief in the importance of their past as a foundation to their work as a socially just leader. In our conversation with Ingrid, she frequently mentioned her mother as a role model for how she leads today. Ingrid's mother was a band director and music teacher in an urban school located in a large southern United States city. Ingrid's sense of care for marginalized children was clearly inherited from watching her mother.

Mom had one particular student who...she stayed at the house a lot and then later I found out that she had a very horrible home life. Her mom beat her. They rarely had any food... I remember growing up and seeing these kids, these high school kids just in our home. They'd spend the night. They'd have dinner with us. Of course, this was back when you could do stuff because you didn't have a few stupid people that made bad decisions and ruined it for everybody... She's [Ingrid's mother] very sensitive towards other peoples' needs and issues... She's just that kind of person and I'm a lot like her so we kind of tend to have bleeding hearts for people and issues and things so that is probably where I get it from so that really influences my background with the kids here. I mean, I just love every one of them... Even on the hard days when I leave at the end of the day, I feel like something went right...[if] the kids left feeling good about being here.

The actions of Ingrid's mother served as the foundation for an innate value in Ingrid. By caring for children in need, Ingrid looked to her mother as a model of compassion, learning from the past that while an everyday occurrence in her childhood home may seem small, the influence on her value system was great. Ingrid expressed that her core mission was serving others.

I say all the time and I really believe this...that we are in the people business. I value people above everything else and that could mean staff, that could mean parents, community people, or that could mean the little people, you know, the kids, of course. I value how we are interacting with people. I kind of take that as my guiding principle.

Barry also mentioned his parents and his high school coaches as being role models for his style of leadership. Interestingly, Barry also recalled his college coach as being a model for how not to lead as well.

My college coach was not a great role model so I learned what not to do by observing him. So, it is a variety of things but between my parents and high school coach, they really gave a foundation...they showed me the right things by example and whenever there were things that were not aligned with what they liked, they let me know about it immediately. Having those standards, if you go into something, you are going to finish it; knowing you are going to put in an honest day's work no matter what your job is, the fact that you are going to try to help out others when you can. Those were things that were instilled in me by those people who let me know that this is what the world should be about, that we help one another, we work hard, we don't quit, we give an honest day's work for an honest day's pay.

Influential people in Barry's past modeled how he should carry himself in the roles that would eventually lead him to become an administrator. Specifically, his work ethic and willingness to provide extra support to students and their families. Barry also called upon the history of the area to inform his understanding of current school culture.

I would think that we need to figure out what we want to achieve with our populations. The thing is, if we cannot take out of the equation the cultures of a particular state, a particular region, particular schools...we have to look at historical data to look traditionally at what has happened. How have those traditional factors impacted education, public or private, and what are the possible actions that we can put into place that would help us to improve our current state?

The use of historical markers, according to Barry, can inform the current state of the schools for which Barry is responsible. Barry recognized that his leadership would be poorly informed if he

did not take the time to reflect on the past lessons that the school system has learned and contextualize those lessons for his current responsibilities.

### **I to We: Individualism to Collective Identity**

While leadership from its earliest beginnings has been viewed as a singular person, the evolution of the leader concept has evoked a reconsideration of this notion. *We* cultures are people oriented where everything is shared, where everyone benefits, and where all are one. Inclusion is the norm and the whole is prioritized before the individual (Bordas, 2012).

The school that Ingrid led was actually built in the middle of a neighborhood over 100 years ago. As a result, the school became the center of the community that grew to think of the school as “ours.” As a new principal, Ingrid set about understanding the surrounding community so that the larger whole could be viewed as one.

That was a goal that I set for myself this year is to learn more about this community and to learn how the school and the community operate together...as much as I can, you know, figure out how decisions that I make affects the community or how thinking about their context and the things that I do here [impact the surrounding community].... This community is really diverse and it's seen a lot of change over the last 100 years as has many communities around America. They have a little bit of every demographic represented but there's lots of history and pride around this school in this community because it's been here since 1912...they really put a lot of value on the school. [They are] so invested in it because it belongs to them. It's like they remember back years ago when the large school bell in the courtyard used to ring and the neighborhood kids would leave their houses and walk into the school. The school is very much the pride of the

community. I'm learning more about how we can honor the history there but move into the future too and do some different things.

When reflecting on his role for the district, Barry frames his leadership in terms of “We” (collective successes) as opposed to “I” (individual successes). When asked how he makes daily decisions based on social justice outcomes, he regularly refers to the community of educators around him and the work they do to ensure student success.

We make decisions based on what is best for our students. Although the state is mandating certain things to us, we work within the constraints of the mandates and still try to provide the best situation for the students. We have to try to meet the individual needs of those kids which means we have to put in a lot of extra work with them... So we provide additional services. We spend extra time with students to get them up to grade level. We make sure that we put them in the best possible environment to where when they go to take their end of course tests, they can be successful.

Barry does not view his leadership as a singular, hierarchical position. He understands that to help marginalized children be successful and productive, the collective *We* is a necessity.

Moreover, he extends the *We* to include an identity, a place that is ‘ours’ but a place that demands collective ways of being. Barry describes the *Gulf Coast High School Way*:

Regardless of what actually happens on the street, when you walk in this door, the doors of this school, we do things the [Gulf Coast] way. And the kids have heard this a number of times so they know when they walk into our building, we are going to do things the [Gulf Coast] way. Those standards may be completely different from what you have at home. They may be completely different from the middle school that you came from. And it may be completely different from the streets that you walk every day but once you

come into this building, they know that this structure is going to provide safety for them, an opportunity for them to grow as an individual, an opportunity for them to express themselves, but they also know that there are checks and balances in place for them to make sure that they can do those things.

By speaking of the school as ‘our collective’, Barry gives the students a place where all are safe and where all can expect to be valued.

### **Mi Casa Es Su Casa: A Spirit of Generosity**

Bordas (2012) explained this principal as “a sprawling sense of inclusiveness and generosity...a joy in sharing” (p. 60). Indigenous peoples honored those who were generous, believing that giving strengthened the collective *We*. For those in positions of leadership, this principle speaks to empowering others, working for equity, and showing compassion. Both principals in this study demonstrated a generosity of leadership.

Empowering children to take responsibility for their behavior and doing so with compassion was one of the first challenges that Ingrid faced as a new principal. Initial observations of the staff indicated to her that marginalized children were not treated respectfully.

When I got here, ...I started noticing that certain staff members...and these aren't teachers. These are mostly teaching assistants that may ride a bus route in the morning or afternoon or they might supervise lunch or breakfast duty every day. They don't really establish good rapport with the minority students and, by the time it's brought to my attention, it's completely erupted into a big huge thing...the child is very upset. So not only are they crying and they're upset, they got attitude because they are older and they're trying to be all tough... I'll take the child and we will kind of walk away a few steps, a few paces and get out of earshot and I'd be like “I need you to go to my office and calm

down because you're very upset right now and when you get calm, you're going to tell me what happened"... By the time I get to the office, I just would approach the situation, approach the student with calm and trying to listen and I really built a lot of rapport that way... just be respectful towards them so they would exhibit respect back to me. Because nine times out of ten, they just want to be heard. They just want to be respected and lots of times, I find that's when a staff person has not really been respectful to them.

As Ingrid built relationships with the children, she also communicated respect and empowered the students to think about the person they wanted to be. Her generosity of spirit will likely have a lasting impact on the children in her school.

I think the schools are great because they represent a little slice of society, just with little people... I look at this line of work I'm in and think, these are the kids I've been given. The task that I've been given is that when they graduate from high school, they've become fully functioning, contributing members to society. I have a hand in that. What am I going to do with it? You know, kind of look at it that way and it goes beyond the reading and the math.

Embedded within Barry's definition of social justice, he speaks to empowering his students, being compassionate, and valuing them as individuals.

It is where everybody has an equal chance to be the best that they can possibly be. It is where we are not going to discriminate against any group because of anything that makes them different from others. It is treating all kids with dignity and respect so that they know that their value is of substance, that they mean something to somebody somewhere. That they are given the opportunity to be whatever they want to be and are successful at it regardless of what their background may be.

In recounting a story of a troublesome student and his mother, Barry acknowledges some of the difficulty that comes with responding to the needs of the community. Rather than disregarding the student and his parent, Barry instead involved the parent in the process of integrating the student into the campus community. Where others saw problems, Barry saw an opportunity to empower a family.

We have one kid who came to us as a freshman who had been in jail a couple of times. Mom has enabled him and defended him throughout all these processes. Mom was also actually participating in fights with the kid in the community. Everyone told us we were stupid for bringing him onto our campus. He cannot do anything for us. He should not be playing sports. Throughout the years, the mother became one of our best parents on our campus because we realized that she was part of the problem. So we tried talking to her while we were talking to the student, letting her know alternatives to defending him. This kid just graduated with us last year...we were able to take a kid who had low expectations of himself, his mother did not have any expectations of him and protected him in any circumstances. I think the structure that we put into place to make sure we met that kid's individual needs allowed us to guide him to a place where his whole family grew and he was able to finish high school and better himself and go on to college.

In schools where marginalized children face challenges every day, sometimes challenges to merely survive, the principals in this study embraced the concept of *Mi Casa Es Su Casa* by providing a space where children are provided opportunities to thrive and be respected. The spirit of generosity, where marginalized children can freely take what is offered, is at the heart of multicultural leadership.

## Discussion

According to Pearce and Conger (2003), shared leadership is a dynamic process by which individuals lead each other to achieve group or organizational goals. In the macro context of school leadership, this is simply what we ask of our school leaders. Those placed in leadership positions must galvanize a community, staff, parents, and students to buy in to the common goal of success in the classroom and beyond. However, as Banks (1994) and later Khalifa, Gooden, and Davis (2016) highlighted, the nature of a globalized world calls for an increased multicultural dimension of the classroom, culturally responsive and relevant leadership is needed. Ingrid and Barry both understand the heterogeneous nature of their schools and community and continually work not only to understand it but to ensure that all voices are heard and represented as a part of that process. They embody Bordas' (2012) view that "human nature as self-centered and individualist is no longer suited to our world village..." (p. 23). Thus, leading from the collective *We* becomes a foundational perspective of Barry and Ingrid's leadership. More importantly, the collective *We* is not practiced to lessen the workload of Barry and Ingrid but to embrace the idea that educating the whole child, particularly the marginalized children who sometimes may be overlooked, is the work of many, including the leader.

In a *We* culture, the school does not belong to the principal but belongs to the collective, including the parents and community who support the work of the school. Thus, the school becomes a source of learning for all but also a safe place, a place of respect, and a place where opportunity may be found. When inclusion is the norm, all identify with the concept of *We*.

In the *Sankofa* spirit, Ingrid and Barry honor the tradition of leadership that came before them. Their leadership journey is not only theirs, but that of their parents and role models that came before them. Both principals acknowledge the values that they inherited from their parents

influence how they enact leadership within their schools and districts. Among those values is a sense of fairness and equality that connect Ingrid and Barry to their school communities.

The spirit of generosity follows as a culmination of the *We* collective. As principals who demonstrated the idea of empowerment and equity, Ingrid and Barry daily practiced the spirit of generosity. Both principals emphasized the empowering marginalized children to seek opportunities and to “be the best they can possibly be” (Barry) begins with respect. As Ingrid noted, many times marginalized children just want someone to listen to them. As multicultural leaders, listening, respecting and empowering are key aspects of the spirit of generosity.

This research examined two head principals from different demographics through the lens of Bordas (2012) multicultural leadership frame to understand how the principles of this frame are lived in multicultural schools. While we do not purport that the two principals in our study are indicative of all multicultural leaders, we believe their practice offers examples of the value of collective leadership, particularly in high needs schools. We wanted to understand principals’ behaviors and decisions when acting in a culture of *We*. As we reflect upon the theme of "Dreams, Possibilities, and Necessities", we consider the principals’ stories of the necessity of embracing all members of the community, within and outside of the school. Both principals acted as advocates for their schools, the students, and the teachers as they supported children to reach their potential. Parents and the community were not forgotten as the principals recognized their roles in the collective and the support they can provide to the whole..

The principals in this study did not claim to be multicultural competent leaders but the stories Ingrid and Barry shared of efforts to meet children’s (and their parents) needs clearly identified them as inclusive and respectful of all cultures. Their passion to live by the notion of

providing access to opportunities for all of their students, while embracing the community in supporting them to do so, pointed to a culture of *We* in their work.

Beyond providing empirical evidence to confirm the usefulness of the multicultural leadership frame (Bordas, 2012), this study also provides narratives for practitioners who may benefit from understanding a multicultural approach to school leadership. By modeling leadership which views the school as a family and working to build consensus among everyone, these leaders begin moving the school culture and stakeholders from thinking individually to adopting a collective identity, from *I* to the collective *we*.

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