CAMINANDO, PREGUNTAMOS:
ROTATING LEADERSHIP AS AN ALTERNATIVE FOR SUSTAINABLE AND EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATORS

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ABSTRACT

Caminando Preguntamos: Rotating Leadership as an Alternative for Sustainable and Effective Administrators

By

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Leadership is a common and often generalized phenomenon. Traditionally, leadership denotes an individual, yet leadership is rarely the work of one. This study looked outside of Western ideologies to further examine leadership. The Zapatistas are a people in charge of autonomous territories in Chiapas, Mexico. This study focused on identifying how rotation in leadership among other Zapatista principles and practices can be implemented into secondary schools for more efficient and sustainable leadership. Through a constructivist grounded theory approach, the researcher interviewed two sets of participants Zapatista delegation and *encuentro* participants along with administrators to develop a Rotating Leadership Model for American high schools.

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To Nancy, my love: Since the moment I saw you, my world changed. These past few years, we battled monsters and climbed treacherous mountains, but through it all we remained hand-in-hand dedicated to each other. My love, I am forever grateful our paths crossed. You have taken me to my highest highs, and I am blessed every day we choose each other. Thank you my love for everything. I could not have done any of this without you. You support me continuously and inspire me to be a better person. I strive to deserve your love everyday and am so blessed to call you my wife.

To my Jacob and Jo, you will never know how much I love you. I am always here for you no matter the circumstance. Know completing this journey was challenging, but it was worth it, every minute. I challenge you to follow your dreams, and work to better the lives of those surrounding you. Be your best self and don't procrastinate.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The art of storytelling has long been used by many throughout the world, and many communities have documented its influence. Throughout this dissertation, stories are used to help establish context by exposing my truths and sharing my inspirations. These stories are my roots. They form my life's purpose and thus the motivation behind this dissertation. There are two ways I want to introduce and frame this dissertation: One is my positionality – my identity and heritage. The other is my experience in education – what I saw and learned as a student and as an educator. Both are bound to each other intersecting, intertwining, and running parallel together narrating the tapestry of my life.

Positionality

I am a queer, cis-gendered, light-skinned, able-bodied, 34 year old Chicana-Nicaragüense from a working class background. Born and raised in Los Angeles, California, my mother and father battled incessantly between balancing societal expectations and their hopes and dreams, striving to provoke personal and collective positive change. These forces continually wedged me between observing what was and envisioning what could be. Moreover, my unorthodox childhood was filled with trailblazing role models, leaving me in a state of always imagining the possible.

My grandmother, Gladys Daisy Cranshaw, brought her three children to Los Angeles 14 months after my mother was born. Knowing a recently divorced mother of three had very little chance of survival and independence, she left Nicaragua, her home and family, to escape her vindictive and womanizing ex-husband. Within four years, she bought her first house, consistently maintained two jobs, and paid for all her three

children to attend private school. My mother comes from a family with relatives supporting oppositional political ideologies: the conservative dictatorship and the liberal guerrilla revolutionaries. And when many sought refugee from a war-torn country, my grandmother dubbed her home the west coast Ellis Island for immigrating family members and acquaintances until they could fend for themselves. She defied the expectations of what a woman should be, creating her own feminist ideals as expressed in her day-to-day acts of resistance.

My great-grandmother, Guadalupe Jenny Nava, originally emigrated from Zacatecas, México. Once in the United States, she worked as a child farm worker and eventually in a fish cannery during World War II. She married a fisherman from Sinaloa and had three children in San Diego, California. My great-grandfather's work schedule regularly left my great-grandmother on her own, forcing an adopted tough exterior to combat the burden of raising her three Mexican-American children in the discriminatory era of the 1930s. Despite her best efforts, her eldest son was in and out of jail. His wife, my father's mother, dropped off my father at his grandmother's house when he was just a toddler and never returned. My great-grandmother picked up the pieces of a broken family and raised my father as her own son. By that time, my great-grandparents owned a community store and several properties affording my father a financially secure environment fueled by his grandmother's tenacity and genius, a woman beyond her time.

My father was a 1970's Brown Beret and MEChistA who still adamantly calls for the armed take over of Aztlan. However, he has fought for the rights of others long enough to begin to realize the loneliness and unjustness of giving everything for a movement that can offer very little in return. His ideas of leadership involve being on the

front lines of protests or acts of defiance against an inequitable American government. As long as I can remember, he worked to instill in me the courage to fight against wrongdoings, especially for those who could not always fight for themselves. My mother sacrificed her aspirations and goals to provide for her family. She is only now learning to live for herself, generously working toward dreams she never before considered feasible. She was my constant reminder of the importance of reaching for what one most desired. Her sympathetic nature and quiet guidance proved an effective balance for my father's unyielding demands for a better world.

These lessons of determination and aspiring for the impossible motivated my wife and me to abandon our fulltime paying jobs to achieve my dream of getting my doctorate degree and opening a school and her dream of writing and directing. At the onset of this academic endeavor, my wife and I were in a position where we were struggling through the decision to follow our dreams in a capitalistic society that constantly discouraged and suffocated us, pushing doubt down our throats with every breathe we took. Our doubt encircled our decision and potential to achieve the lives we were meant to versus our expected places in the production lines of an oppressive system. Thankfully, we are finally beginning to see the fruits of our labor. Our lofty goals are not yet within our grasp, but they are within sight. And, it is our love and support for one another that helps us muster up the strength and courage to continue forward.

The complexities of my identity are stitched together to carefully create my character, my personality, my core being. Piece by piece, each facet of my identity lends itself to construct the lens with which I see the world, and my expressions of identity, both conscious and unconscious, shape how the world sees me. These intersecting

identities forge circumstances where I experience privilege and oppression, sometimes concurrently (Bell, 2016). These intricacies, in many cases, structured my access to certain experiences and how I navigated through those same experiences. I come from a legacy of perseverance and rebellion. I am surrounded by giants and leaders in their own right. All of which have fueled, to some degree, this dissertation. None is perfect and neither am I, but these stories incited my imagination of what was and dreams of what could be. Although this may appear unrelated, all of these factors are foundational elements of my identity, molding my perspective and guiding me to this dissertation topic.

Educational Experiences

I never grew up wanting to be a teacher. My first time applying to be a high school teacher was an act of convenience. After overcoming my initial terror, I fell in love with teaching. Since then, I have had the privilege of working at several different middle and high schools in an assortment of neighborhoods, working in private, public, and charter schools. Throughout these experiences, I can only identify one administrator who I would characterize as effective and supportive. At the time, I did not understand the role of administrators and was satisfied to limit my exchanges with them. However, I witnessed from afar that their isolation, struggle, and burden were all too common similarities.

As many of my colleagues and friends in middle and high schools began climbing the ranks from teachers to administrators, I observed the trauma and frustrations stemming from their newly appointed positions. I do not envy administrators, but my observations and interactions have lead me to carry deep empathy for them. I have never

been an administrator nor desire to be one. I am a first and foremost a teacher. Thus, I distinctly see the administrator position through a teacher's lens, but I can still recognize how administrators are often systematically set up for failure.

I believe that administrators are often misunderstood, under prioritized, and oppressed by established systems enabling injustice. The administrator position is set in an educational oppressive institution that does not prioritize humanity at its core (Apple, 2009; Freire, 1970/2009; Freire, 1998). Our educational leaders are held prisoners to structures in which they are not only the oppressed, but also the oppressors by internalizing and reinforcing inhumane institutional practices (Bell, 2016). Many are overworked (Kaplan & Owings, 1999) and have little energy to challenge or question, and, thus, become complacent. These are but some of the difficulties that led me to seek a better alternative.

While getting my bachelor's degree at California State University, Northridge (CSUN), I learned that the Chicana/o Studies Department participated in a shared governance leadership model. In recalling how professors discussed this rotating administrative position, no one seemed to look forward to their turn. In fact, it appeared as if each person who became chair did so out of an obligation, a depressing and compulsory passing of the torch. Nonetheless, the chair position did not experience high turnover rates or seem to suffer long term from unbearable work stressors.

Although the rotation of CSUN department chairs was my first tangible recollection of a type of rotational leadership, my familial and academic backgrounds granted me the opportunity to be in environments where alternative approaches to insurgency, leadership, and life were constantly discussed. The Zapatistas, an indigenous,

revolutionary community in Chiapas, México also rotates leadership positions in their participatory democracy. However, there are many aspects of Zapatista practices that inspire sustainable and effective progress, an existence that may be lacking in K-12 and higher education institutions. The Zapatista way of living has intrigued many, from their first global introduction through the uprising of 1994, and I believe it can offer a viable guide for leadership practices.

Leadership and the Complexity of Educational Change

Educational institutions exist within complex environments (Abu-Hussain & Essawi, 2014) and have, accordingly, become large and sophisticated (Stukalina, 2010) in response to the various efforts to try to improve public schools (Cheng & Cheung, 2003; Deal, 1990). This educational restructuring has caused school leadership to be in flux (Kaplan & Owings, 1999; Leonard & Leonard, 1999; Mehta, 2013). Administrators tend to strive towards developing constructive educational environments (Stukalina, 2010) and taking on the accountability of satisfying external expectations (Muñoz & Barber, 2011). Within constantly changing settings, attracting and retaining qualified administrators is a clear priority (Pounder & Crow, 2005). Regrettably, there is often a disconnect between the assumed job expectations and responsibilities with actual administrator duties (Okutan, 2014). This disconnect stimulated arguments that the administrator position must be re-imagined and redesigned (Pounder & Crow, 2005). New roles must continue to be created, and teachers and administrators must reflect on their roles and purposes during these periods of change (Leonard & Leonard, 1999). Therefore, educational key stakeholders must be prepared to honestly evaluate, discard, redefine, where necessary, and experiment (Leonard & Leonard, 1999).

Change, however, does not come without discomfort. A change in educational organizational design will require a "renegotiation of cherished myths and sacred rituals" (Deal 1990, p. 9). Major change to the organizational structures in education has been on the horizon for some time, and it will necessitate courage (Okutan, 2014). As Deal (1990) predicted, educational stakeholders will not be able to ignore nor misidentify the need for the structural changes that are fast approaching. The role of passive bystander is no longer acceptable. Many schools are neither efficient nor sustainable leaving too many of student and educator casualties on the wayside. Yet, "the age is pregnant with possibilities" (Counts, 2013, p. 47).

Problem Statement

American schools reproduce hierarchical societies (Apple, 2009) and such power structures "maintain systems of advantage and disadvantage" (Bell, 2016, p. 6). Educational organizations in primary and secondary education institutions are not representative of current management understandings (Okutan, 2014). They were originally founded in business structures meant to control workers and weaken progressive unions (Apple, 2009). Schools essentially continue to be organized as they were a century ago (Supovitz, 2015). Policymakers have yet to truly consider the current and changing educational landscape, and school administrator roles and job descriptors remain stagnant (Nir & Hameiri, 2015; Supovitz, 2015). And, with changing societal expectations, the effectiveness of a leadership hierarchy is ambiguous at best (Kühl, Schnelle, & Tillmann, 2005). These ever-present foundations deny true opportunity for profound change.

There is a general consensus that our schools need to be better; however, that consensus dissipates when deciding how to best go about school improvement (Ravitch, 2010). A plethora of initiatives, policies, reforms, and strategies have been attempted in an effort to revitalize American public schools (Cheng & Cheung, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2014; Deal, 1990; Mehta, 2013). One example is the various models of leadership that have been haphazardly considered, implemented, and even diagnosed as unsustainable (Dantley, 2010; Leonard & Leonard, 1999). Despite such efforts for change, cultural socialization and expectations of the familiar, the status quo, prove steadfast (Deal, 1990). More often, the commonplace is unquestioned and accepted (Kühl et al., 2005), favored above the new and different.

No Child Left Behind (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002) and *Race to the Top* (Race to the Top [RTT], 2009) are the most recent federal programs that have expanded the accountability for educational leadership positions in the K-12 environment (Muñoz & Barber, 2011) in an American public educational system that is constantly changing (Gulcan, 2012; Nir & Hameiri, 2015). And, despite some progress, widespread improvements are still lacking (Mehta, 2013). In some cases, these have the opposite results (Ravitch, 2010). The job descriptions of the role of administrators, thus the positions, have shifted (Wells & Klocko, 2015). Now accountability and performance are key (Onorato, 2013), aiming to ensure "higher levels of learning for all students" (Wells & Klocko, 2015, p. 313). This further complicates the position of a school administrator (Abu-Hussain & Essawi, 2014; Onorato, 2013; Pounder & Crow, 2005; Shoho & Barnett, 2010; Wells & Klocko, 2015). With the result that the burden has proved too much for

most to effectively and sustainably accomplish their goals (Kaplan & Owings, 1999; Militello, Fusarelli, Mattingly, & Warren, 2015; Wells & Klocko, 2015).

Generally, the term "administrator" cultivates negative connotations (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009). This may be due to the obvious burden administrators carry or the practices they are coerced to uphold. By definition, an administrator is a person who manages (Dictionary.com), a person who is responsible for running an organization (Google Dictionary). In an educational setting, the varied roles of an administrator can include: collaborating with parents, unions, community groups, and political constituents (Onorato, 2013); creating safe and rigorous environments for teachers to excel (Foster & Wiseman, 2015); financial budgeting and funding (Onorato, 2013); discipline, instructional leadership (Gulcan, 2012); managing performance expectations for both students and teachers (Abu-Hussain & Essawi, 2014); overseeing human resources (Gulcan, 2012; Onorato, 2013); and overall student well-being and achievement (Muñoz & Barber, 2011). An administrator is also responsible for fulfilling and keeping track of the mission and vision of the educational institution and, when necessary, school transformation (Gulcan, 2012). Surprisingly, many of these responsibilities are similar to business leaders in private industry (Onorato, 2013), yet it is education administrators, especially in urban areas, who find themselves working within the most stressful occupations and with limited resources (Sorenson, 2007).

There is research on principal stress for more than three decades (Wells & Klocko, 2015). Some administrator stressors include: compliance with state and federal mandates; general conflict and constant interruptions; changing demographics; creation of vision for school improvement; curriculum demands; feeling overwhelmed; financial

constraints; increased expectations; insufficient time; loss of joy in the job and personal time; personnel management; reports and presentations for state and district entities; student discipline; supervision; test score expectations; and volume of paperwork (Wells & Klocko, 2015). Administrators also experience stress based on their insecurities regarding lack of policy and curriculum knowledge (Nelson, de la Colina, & Boone, 2008). Further, newly appointed administrators are subjected to extreme isolation, functional and hierarchical boundaries, and socialization practices that work to obliterate their teacher identity and replace it with an administrator persona (Armstrong, 2012). Considering the aforementioned, health and illness issues result (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009). Research shows administrators suffer from numerous health concerns (Wells & Klocko, 2015). This brief synopsis of administrator stresses and classic consequences provides a better context for understanding why many administrators regularly contemplate leaving their position (Oleszewski, Shoho, & Barnett, 2012) and for high administrator turnover rates (Shoho & Barnett, 2010). It also begins to define a specific problem of principal effectiveness, retention, and overall health. Such an occurrence is not only typical to principals, but also to vice-principals who have comparable realities.

Significance of the Problem

Education is powerful (Apple, 2009; Freire, 1992). It plays a pivotal function in society (Mehta, 2013). It is identified as a means to the pursuit of happiness and prosperity (Soemartono, 2014), and each educational institution aims to provide students with the best learning opportunities (Stukalina, 2010). Schools can be an opportunity for societal growth and progress (Mehta, 2013) and can have far reaching societal outcomes (Ravitch, 2010). However, many institutions fall short of these goals. Internationally, the

U.S. is not known for its educational endeavors (Darling-Hammond, 2014). Change is critical and crucial to realize national growth, and this change begins with leadership (Onorato, 2013) as leaders can be agents of change (Raelin, 2012).

The influence and value of a leader is broadly accepted. In fact, school principals are typically central figures in the entire education system (Abu-Hussain & Essawi, 2014). Leadership is the driving force (Onorato, 2013) and foundation for effectual management (Senthamil Raja & Palanichamy, 2011). In an educational setting, school administrators can be the most important factor in overall school achievement (Gulcan, 2012). Within education, "successful leadership influences teaching and learning" (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008, p. 659). These leaders are capable of instigating consequential change by influencing the behavior and performance of their workers impacting processes and results (Abu-Hussain & Essawi, 2014). Leaders are looked to in moments of need and improvement and can be indispensable for necessary transformations needed for 21st century schools (Abu-Hussain & Essawi, 2014; Oleszewski et al., 2012). Yet, exceptional and significant leaders are often underappreciated and overworked causing high turnover, which can affect a school's outcomes and stability in sudden and critical ways (Shoho & Barnett, 2010), creating environments afflicted by the antithesis of sustainability and efficiency (Stukalina, 2010). Consequently, students and their educational achievements are impacted.

Literature shows clear and specific leadership practices are needed to have greater positive impact on student outcomes (Robinson et al., 2008). What is currently missing in the literature is how school administrators can lead in personally and professionally sustainable ways within present leadership models. Organizationally, a refined school

leadership structure can positively impact classrooms (Supovitz, 2015). Education, in this country, cannot be improved with one single answer (Ravitch, 2010). However, there are other leadership models that are not traditionally considered that can be explored, for example, implementing Zapatista practices, including rotation of leadership, may prove beneficial in addressing many of the difficulties previously revealed.

Purpose of this Study

There are leaders who have operated and remained in these administrative leadership positions, but many fall short. There is a shortage of qualified administrators (Petzko, 2008; Pounder & Crow; Winter, Partenheimer, & Petrosko, 2003). Some research links this shortage to a decrease in the desire to hold an administrative position not to a lack of qualified candidates (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009; Petzko, 2008; Winter et al., 2003). According to Shoho and Barnett (2010), many who do become administrators aim to transfer out of the position within five to ten years, perhaps speaking to the demands of this position. And, as previously mentioned, high principal turnover rates persist (Shoho & Barnett, 2010). This study aims to create a different leadership model addressing the contemporary needs of administrators and their positions.

Educational leadership is in an optimal position for growth and change (Foster & Wiseman, 2015), for many current systems in place are outdated or ineffectual (Feeney, 2009). A change is necessary to better prepare school leaders (Cranston, 2008) to work in sustainable, supportive settings. Fundamentally, the purpose of this study is to add to the knowledge on leadership and, hopefully, improve the systematic practices connected to school leadership by using Zapatista practices as a guide to explore the possible and provoke creativity (Bell, 2006). The goal of this grounded theory study was

to research key components of Zapatista practices and then conceptualize how those components can be implemented in a secondary educational setting. As many higher institutions participate in rotated leadership, the study also examined department chairs as a reference. This study included two phases. The first phase included a group of persons who participated in first hand experiences with Zapatista communities. They identified meaningful Zapatista practices and principles and articulated possible school implementations. The second phase was comprised of administrators who absorbed these principles and practices and assembled a new leadership model and culture. The questions that were the overall impetus for this research were:

- What are key Zapatista transferrable cultural practices and principles that can be applied to secondary schools leadership?
- What are important elements of Zapatista leadership rotation practices that can be implemented for sustainable rotating leadership structure for secondary schools?

Terms

Language has the beauty and complication of possessing denotations and connotations. Although a word's denotation can typically vary slightly and can be verified through dictionaries and easily accessible websites, the connotation often provides infinite possibilities. Nevertheless, most assume to know what a word means; yet, this assumption can easily cause some confusion. Additionally, traditional terminologies may have lost their uniqueness (Kühl et al., 2005). Throughout this process of discovery, hopefully, new definitions will emerge. However, to maintain clear understanding, I want to include how I define leaders and leadership:

Leaders: In this context, a leader has an intangible quality with which this leader directs its organization to success, a tool of transformation (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2013).

Leadership: Leadership has been defined in many ways (Bush, 2003; Leonard & Leonard, 1999). For this study, leadership will be based on three units. Leadership has to power to influence. It is values grounded. Thirdly, leadership encourages creation, communication, and directing of vision (Bush, 2003).

Rotating Leadership: This element can exist in many different leadership models, where the responsibilities of the leader are rotated between selected administrators, each serving a particular role.

Conclusion

Traditional leadership served its purpose, but it is no longer relevant (Raelin, 2005). It has and continues to be the responsibility of all those within the educational system to respond to change (Renfro & Morrison, 1983). Recognizing our often limiting and dogmatic compliance with established and typically rigid systems of thought is just one step. Change is something else entirely (Kühl et al., 2005). Breaking out of the familiar presents its own challenges, requiring an innovative perspective (Deal, 1990). Yet, literature does show change is possible (Lazzari, Colarossi, & Collins, 2009), and leaders can provoke change (Abu-Hussain & Essawi, 2014). However, that is less likely when leadership turnover is constant and school administrators are under intense stress.

The problems described in this chapter are not new. In fact, these issues have been researched for quite some time. Within the thrust to restructure education (Leonard &

Leonard, 1999), staying confined to the status quo is purposeless. The ideas of preaching teamwork while contrastingly praising and expecting individual heroes to save education is folly (Raelin, 2014). Instead of continuing this pattern, educational leaders must "be actively and tangibly involved in developing the educational system and in overseeing its performance" (Abu-Hussain & Essawi, 2014, p. 51). Additionally, leadership should not be sectioned off for an elite few, but instead defined as a practice by which many can participate and transition into (Raelin, 2012). We must engage in the development of new structures (Boylan, 2016) while also looking past historically accepted ways of thinking, empowering people with a yearn to see, question, and act differently (Whang & Waters, 2001). This is a call for a radicalization of school leadership, one that places humanity at its center. Because a radical lens criticizes everything (Freire, 1970/2009), this study firstly displays the context of several seemingly separate entities to compose one leadership design. Secondly, but perhaps most importantly, this dissertation reaches for aspirations beyond the current state of our educational institutions aiming for liberation (Freire, 1970/2009). Our present institutions exhibit many opportunities for growth, but I call on school leaders to seize this moment. School leaders must lead the charge past convention overcoming our ossified educational system (Okutan, 2014) and pursue a balanced, effective, and sustainable working leadership structure that supports their professional goals and personal well-being.

In the following dissertation, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 are each sections of a literature review. Chapter 2 provides some historical background on the Zapatistas and discusses some key leadership practices. This chapter goes on to review diverse and relevant leadership theories. Chapter 3 presents the current context through which

administrators lead. Chapter 4 describes the methodology used in this grounded theory qualitative study. Chapter 5 provides profiles of Zapatista delegation or *encuentro* participants and also addresses emerging themes. Chapter 6 presents profiles of administrators and outline found themes. Chapter 7 discusses overarching themes and conclusions. Each chapter of this dissertation works towards threading together the foundation for what a rotating leadership model could look like in the secondary setting.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review: High Hopes of Zapatismo

On November 17, 1983, six people came together in the Lacandon Jungle and began the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (Marcos, 2003). This was the "first stop on a voyage that everyone knew would be very long" (Marcos, 2003, p. 21). More the thirty years later, the Zapatistas have been able to survive schemes of extermination and instead build an autonomous society to meet their own needs with dignity. Throughout this time, the Zapatistas have worked continuously to better themselves and overcome persistent and pestering ordinary cycles of oppression and dehumanization (Barmeyer, 2009). In addition, Zapatista communities have inspired and connected with people throughout the world who, on similar paths, strive to prevail outside of the dominions of oppressive societies and practices (Lance, 1997). The intentions of overcoming that originated with the first six lingers on through their initial vision providing a great starting point for "considering how a better world might be possible" (O'Hearn, 2008, p. xii)

The Zapatista Army of the National Liberation

The Zapatista Army of the National Liberation (EZLN) is based in Chiapas, the most southwestern state of Mexico, along the border of Guatemala. The Zapatistas owe their namesake to Emiliano Zapata Salazar, a leader during the Mexican Revolution. For many years its known general commander was Subcomandante Marcos (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994), who was additionally the spokesperson of the Zapatistas (Hayden, 2002). This movement was and continues to be primarily comprised of and lead by indigenous peoples and is grassroots-oriented (Andrews, 2010; EZLN, 1992).

Furthermore, it is recognized by many progressives as prominent and resilient (Andrews, 2010). The Zapatistas, members of the EZLN, have been designated as the first post-modern Latin guerrilla formation (Ross, 1995), and originally baffled those who believed that the revolutionary era had ended (Hayden, 2002). Likewise, those leaning towards liberal politics detected, within the Zapatistas, previously lacking revolutionary transformative activity (Hayden, 2002). From its humble beginnings, the Zapatistas have gone on to establish a transnational solidarity network (Andrews, 2010). Now known as one of the most powerful social justice movements within current times (Starr, Martinez-Torres, & Rosset, 2011), the Zapatistas spawned from abominable conditions at the heel of an oppressive government.

Setting the Historical Context

Although many may equate Mexico with a reputation of poverty and danger, "the region behind the headlines is a complicated one" (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994, p. 7). "Billions of tons of natural resources go through Mexican Ports, railway stations, airports, and road systems to various destinations...all with the same destiny: to feed the empire" (EZLN, 1992, p. 33), and Chiapas has a significant role in these exports (EZLN, 1995). Chiapas is responsible for many items in Mexico's national market (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994; EZLN, 1992). Such as Marcos recognized, these were acts of plunder where leaders also cast a blind eye to the many deaths of the working poor (Marcos, 1994b). For it was with certain exports that transformed the indigenous peoples' experience into "virtual debt slaves" (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994 p. 23) further widening the gap between the rich and poor (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994). In the late 1980s and early 1990s, many of the avocados, bananas, cocoa, coffee, corn, honey, mamey, and wax

originated in Chiapas (EZLN, 1992). The region additionally produces electric power, hydroelectric power, livestock, petroleum, and wood (EZLN, 1992). Despite much capital generated in this area, most of its citizens lived and continue to live in poverty (EZLN, 1992). During that time, most people lived in the countryside, with little to no income (EZLN, 1992). “Half [did not] have access to potable water, and two-thirds [had] no sewage systems” (EZLN, 1992, 35). It is the quantity of resources manufactured and produced within the area that frustrated many, for it propagates a situation where the prosperity of few is based on the poverty of many (Marcos, 1994b).

In addition to the deplorable financial conditions of many, education and health are additional demonstrations of the subjugation endured by the Chiapan citizens. Marcos goes on to point out that at the time seventy-two percent of children did not finish the first grade and many of the schools did not offer grades higher than the third grade (EZLN, 1992). Many indigenous children had no choice but to work to aid in their family’s survival (EZLN, 1992). In regards to health, malnourishment, hunger, and a lack of adequate medical services were common (EZLN, 1992). Chiapas, at the time, was already cut off from necessary government services and true economic opportunities for socio-economic upward mobility and those with access to public services was based on political affiliation (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994)The Zapatistas unequivocally have exposed, challenged, and resisted this particular cruel cyclical illusion (Marcos, 1994b).

The Zapatista Movement

Considering all these inhumane brutalities, it is no wonder the Zapatistas were exasperated by “so many years of deception and death (EZLN, 1994a, p. 71) and likewise overcome by brutal acts by the U.S. One such brutal act that motivated their rise was the

signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Canada, Mexico, and the United States (Marcos, 1994a; O'Hearn, 2008). This act cemented their stance. The Zapatista movement was one that spawned from desperation (Muñoz Ramírez, 2008). The rebellion was in response to "long-standing patterns of exploitation and discrimination in this region of rich land and poor people" (Earle & Simonelli, 2005, p. 2). Subcomandante Marcos has cited the seemingly routine reworking of Article 27 in the Mexican Constitution as an action that also provoked the actions in January 1994 (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994). The Zapatistas were finished with being pawns and victims of political and class conflicts over centuries of time (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994). Their resistance was an obligation to their people, for "nothing could move among so much oppression" (EZLN, 1994b, p. 205). On January 1, 1994, "equipped with rubber boots, homemade army uniforms, bandanas, ski masks, and weapons ranging from handmade wooden rifles to Uzi machine guns" (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994, p. 1) the EZLN "rose up in arms against the central government" (EZLN, 1994c., p. 218) and declared war on the Mexican government (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994; Mentinis, 2006). All coinciding with the implementation of NAFTA (Barmeyer, 2009; Hayden, 2002; Earle & Simonelli, 2005).

The Zapatistas attacked and occupied several municipalities within the south-eastern region of Chiapas (Earle & Simonelli, 2005; Hayden, 2002). More specifically, they occupied appropriated lands (O'Hearn, 2008). On January 1, 1994, they read the First Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle from a balcony of each city building (Muñoz Ramírez, 2008). They wrote additional demands in the Declaration of the Lacondon Rainforest concentrating on democracy, education, food, freedom, health, housing,

independence, jobs, justice, land, and peace (Muñoz Ramírez, 2008; EZLN, 1995), for their struggle is a "war waged by the working class against the expansion of capital and its devastating consequences" (Mentinis, 2006, 45). They fought bloody battles against the Mexican army and the federal police (EZLN, 1992). "These lasted ten days and ended up with an indeterminate number of deaths, some 200 to 300" (Mentinis, 2006, p. 9). Journalists each came up with a different body count, but all agreed most were civilians (Muñoz Ramírez, 2008). Government troops attempted to recapture towns and "deal" with the Zapatistas (Barmeyer, 2009). The Mexican government responded in full and pushed the Zapatistas out of the central highlands and into the tropical forests of the east lowlands (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994).

The Zapatistas were not shy of their belief that an armed or unarmed revolution was within reach. They worked to respond strategically and keep the world informed of the happenings through published communiqués. The world was watching, and generally agreed that their acts merited justification based on the state of affairs in Chiapas (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994). They pushed not for a complete anarchist existence, but for identified conditions for improved democratic spaces, a government of national transition with a new constitution guaranteeing the fundamental rights of democracy, freedom, and justice (Marcos, 1994b). The Zapatistas also called for land reform addressing the long and antagonistic relationship between the workers and landowners (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994). They additionally did not demand to secede from Mexico, but instead demanded autonomy. Soon after the Zapatista initial uprising, Marcos (1994b) noted their general distrust and suspicion of those who requested them to lay down their weapons based on centuries of costly deceptions and falsities (Marcos, 1994b). The world was watching,

many from television newscasts. These images erupted into global protests demanding a halt in the Despite hesitancy from both sides, the Mexican President called for cease-fire on January 12, 1994 (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994). Chaos ensued and tensions rose, but peace talks did eventually begin on February 21, 1994 (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994). The Mexican government sought to crush the Zapatistas, but they failed. Such attempts backfired and instead worked to strengthen the Zapatistas' resolve and resiliency (Earle & Simonelli, 2005).

The constant and ruthless acts of the Mexican government were overwhelming, yet the Zapatistas tried to remain peaceful (Muñoz Ramírez, 2008). Despite hostilities (Earle & Simonelli, 2005), what followed is a long back and forth struggle where eventually the Zapatistas gain autonomy from the Mexican government. Thereafter, they have struggled to attain political autonomy and have, since 2007, implemented participatory democracy in their leadership (Starr et al., 2011). Their autonomy refers to local and regional control of education, healthcare, along with development processes and practices all intertwined with the ultimate goal of community self-sufficiency and revitalization (Earle & Simonelli, 2005).

For many, the Zapatistas appeared to be a spontaneous overnight rebellion (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994). Additionally, Chiapas did not seem breeding ground for a revolution, catching many Mexicans by surprise (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994). However, a movement rarely erupts from nothing; often, many inciting events precede what becomes inevitable although frequently overlooked and regularly belittled. For example, the 1970s and 1980s were a time where many *campesino* organizations emerged (Mentinis, 2006). More specifically, indigenous communities prepared for this rebellion

for approximately ten years (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994; Hayden, 2002). For years beforehand, Guatemalan intelligence noted and informed Mexican authorities of the existence of a guerrilla group and their general whereabouts (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994), yet the size was considered small and not threatening (Mentinis, 2006). Though the Zapatistas now are spread across Chiapas and have influenced many worldwide, the original group included six. Those first six were comprised of half mestizo and half indigenous descent and less than 20 percent of that group consisted of women. Since then, the Zapatista numbers have changed drastically with more that 90 percent indigenous and closer to 45 percent of women (Marcos, 2003).

After the first preliminary public appearance, many actions, communiqués, and declarations followed (Mentinis, 2006), all with the aim of furthering their cause and that of all those oppressed and exploited. Theirs was an indigenous struggle challenging "the hegemony of the dominant political system, proposing an alternative national political project based on the indigenous principle of 'command obeying'" (Mentinis, 2006, p. 35). Such involves consulting with "its constituents over most decisions and in its general use of consensus to reach decisions" (Earle & Simonelli, 2005, p. 168). Mentinis, (2006) go on to note that the Zapatistas have demonstrated abilities in self-organization and self-valorization. Self-valorization deals with the "process of autonomous self-development and production of value and subjectivity that become possible through collective, co-operative labour and action" (Mentinis, 2006, p. 109).

Despite the work of the Zapatistas, much of the atrocities of Chiapas continue to remain unresolved and overlooked (Marcos, 1994b). And, in their own words, "The hope that our people will be able to live well and govern ourselves, the inheritance our

ancestors left us, walks on without rest (EZLN, 1994b, p. 204). The events of 1994 did not defeat or even really blemish capitalism (Mentinis, 2006), yet the Zapatistas remain unwavering in their striving for freedom; they continue their peaceful resistance (Ross, 1995) and identify their endeavor for sustainability as an act of peaceful resistance (Earle & Simonelli, 2005). They call for change transcending presidential terms (EZLN, 1994c). Their fight continues to be about "gaining control over life and what happens in the shared future (Earle & Simonelli, 2005, p. 254). Today, Zapatistas additionally have significant support internationally and within non-revolutionary sectors of society (Lynd & Grubacic, 2008).

Zapatista Leadership

The Zapatistas acknowledge that all feed the beast of capitalism; however, they work to always select the path of dignity, honesty, truth, and dignified peace (EZLN, 1992). They operate with this in mind in many individual and community actions. This is also the basis for their organizational leadership model. After being dominated and oppressed by various entities for more than 500 years, the Zapatistas felt steadfast in creating a leadership model where many had a voice (EZLN, 1992). Initially, their severe and delicate needs required their military leadership among the communities. This leadership was very hierarchical. As time progressed, the Zapatistas began draining power from the military and cascading power to the communities, particularly with community affairs (Barmeyer, 2009).

More and more, the Zapatistas organize themselves from their own will centralized on their needs and problems (Marcos, 1994b). Initial outside perspectives categorized them with an anti-hierarchical anti-leadership structure, collective decision-

making process, and anti-militaristic political agenda (Barmeyer, 2009). Their leadership structure is more akin to a inversion of traditional hierarchy where leadership positions are rotated and decisions are always taken collectively (Mentinis, 2006). Where Subcomandante Marcos could be identified as the Zapatista leader, he is instead a subordinate and subject to the will of the people (Collier & Quaratiello, 1994). Additionally, he proudly recounts the process of publishing and sending out previous communiqués. No matter who initiates the idea behind the communiqué, before it is sent out he asks for permission and approval of the collective for all actions on behalf of the Zapatistas (Marcos, 1994a).

There is little research on the internal workings of the Zapatistas (Mentinis, 2006). This may be a clear case of reluctance of many indigenous communities to disclose certain details about their practices (Mentinis, 2006). There is a collection of further implications regarding the leadership practiced and envisioned, generally centered on nurturing autonomy and the whole self. For the Zapatistas, "the person who commands, commands obeying" (EZLN, 1994d, p. 238) where "the people make decisions for the leaders" (Earle & Simonelli, 2005, p. 260). Additionally, in referring to a proposed government structure, they call for the ability for the people to, at any time, alter or modify their form of government (EZLN, 1994d). They call for each group supporting a political ideology to persuade the nation allowing the people to decide their country's political fate (Marcos, 1994b). The Zapatistas do, however, highlight one key facet of a democratic structure: the "ability and willingness to listen" (Starr et al., 2011, p. 108).

Zapatista participatory governing practices. Starr et al. (2011) states there are six dimensions of how the Zapatistas implement participatory democracy. However, for

the purposes of this study, two will be discussed because of their relevance to alternative leadership practices. The first leadership example comes from the Political and Military Leadership which rules the EZLN through a committee comprised of one female and male primarily civilian representatives for each indigenous ethnic group in the area. This committee is known as the Comite Clandestino Revolucionario Indigena (Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee - CCRI) and functions as the "ultimate authority in Zapatista territories" (Starr et al., 2011, p. 104). The second leadership example is the Consultations and Assemblies which approves all CCRI decisions through a specific, six month process. All Zapatistas older than 12 to 15 attend assemblies, only exempted by cases of illness or conflicting work obligations. Each assembly is presented with an issue. Thereafter, discussion ensues until a few ideas emerge and eventually an agreement is reached. Generally, the Zapatistas stress the collective. This is a lengthy process focused on equal participation where consensus can emerge, creating a consensus governance (Earle & Simonelli, 2005).

Local governing structures. Each municipality has its own governing structure and practices. As the Zapatista territories range from many cities and towns, they are divided into regions. Each region has a *caracol.* These *caracoles* were created as the location of adjudication, conflict resolution, and development (Earle & Simonelli, 2005). The *caracoles* are community centers housing community meetings and the headquarters of the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* (Good Governance Councils). These methods of governing are staffed by community members and are a prime example of their participatory democracy (Barmeyer, 2009). The *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* (JBG) and Councils are responsible for economic and civic affairs, providing government services

for each municipality (Starr et al., 2011). They also serve to set policy ranging from internal development to peacekeeping (Earle & Simonelli, 2005). There are approximately 38 municipal councils/juntas and 5 regional JBG each with their own rules and rotations of leadership (Starr et al., 2011).

"The juntas make the major decisions; the commissions handle the details" (Starr et al., 2011, p. 106). These juntas are designed so every Zapatista can serve, demystifying government processes. Each municipal council has community elected representatives. They "form a rotational pool for the regional juntas, from which 8-16 members govern the region at any one time. People serve from one to three years, periodically rotating into the junta for periods of seven to ten days so that they can maintain their other responsibilities" (Starr et al., 2011, p. 105). No one receives payment or has official staff. The precise translation for the *caracoles* is a snail shell, but the term additionally has metaphorical meaning. The *caracoles* symbolize the "linkage between the past traditions and the present in regional headquarter" (Nash, 2005, p. x). They are a Maya symbol of time and true speech (Earle & Simonelli, 2005). This essentially embodies the Zapatistas' strive to remain ingrained in their origin customs and traditions whilst pertaining relevancy, verifying continuous reflection and progression.

As the Zapatistas have acquired a world stage, they have been prone to an abundance of descriptors, positive and negative. Furthermore, in an era of fake news, one can truly only be sure of lived experiences. Nonetheless, the Zapatistas practice a sort of "social experiment to discover alternative ways to arrange people in space so no one is left behind" (Earle & Simonelli, 2005, p. 292). Clearly, they prove unique in their methods and resiliency in continued autonomous survival and development.

The Zapatistas and education. The Zapatistas "are actively searching for a new educational program that will cultivate multi-skilled people" (Nash, 2005, p. ix). This has proved challenging for their multifarious needs require one who can function in agricultural and leadership roles (Nash, 2005). In 2002, Chiapas was home to only one institution of secondary education (Mentinis, 2006). The Zapatista Autonomous Rebel Secondary School (ESRAZ) served students from ages 14 to 19, and routed students to work within the autonomous community after three years of study (Mentinis, 2006). At the time, the school had a hierarchical structure, with its leadership in the hands of three indigenous people responsible for the main decision making concerning the school (Mentinis, 2006). The teachers were indigenous members and known instead as the promoters of education (Mentinis, 2006). One clear distinction between this school and government schools revolves around the curricular and instructional practices of the school, as they were decided not by the government, but by the Zapatista community members (Mentinis, 2006). The schools within Zapatista territories are but another effort to promote and develop community participation as its members are able to verify the instruction remains consistent with the needs of the community (Barmeyer, 2009).

Concluding the Zapatistas

The Zapatista uprising prompted a world-wide movement (Lynd & Grubbacic, 2008; Muñoz Ramírez, 2008). The EZLN inspires and encourages (Bardacke, 1995) many to find opportunities in their own settings to obtain freedom. Specifically, they call housewives, intellectuals, peasants, workers, students, and teachers to "join the struggle in your own way using your own methods, so that we can win the justice and freedom that all Mexicans desire" (Marcos, 1994a, p. 61). Although Mexicans are highlighted

here, this can be a call to all be for all people, a call for all to strive towards. “In a world where more and more people are forced into an undignified existence, dignity, as a revolutionary category, is the struggle against the negation of itself” (Mentinis, 2006, p. 46). It is then dignity that an alternative leadership model should strive for, one where its leaders are able to fulfill their requirements without giving in to the exploitation of the oppressive structure embedded within more traditional educational settings.

The Zapatistas are not perfect and continue to expand. They are not professing to know all the answers but merely wish to begin the conversation of an alternative to the dominant capitalist existence. The Zapatistas continue in the struggle to “define and implement alternative models of development and governance using administrative practice derived in part from indigenous customs” (Earle & Simonelli, 2005, p. 8). Thus, the various rotating elements and participatory democratic practices are described in short. The information available about the inner workings of the Zapatistas and the JBG, in particular, are scarce within the academic world. Much more information is needed to better understand their leadership structures and sustainability. Furthermore, A critical analysis is valuable to better understand and identify transferable elements for a rotating leadership model.

Throughout their practices, the Zapatistas are constantly reflecting and identifying methods they can improve. One of their primary objectives is creating a culture of leadership among all community members. As community members rotate in and out of positions of leadership, the Zapatistas do no see themselves in a hierarchical governing system. Everyone is a leader; everyone contributes. This, in many ways, is very different from traditional understandings and practices of leadership. The Zapatista understanding

of leaders and thus leadership is very unique. There are many leadership theories that do show elements of Zapatismo, and the following section seeks to identify and link the theoretical to some of their practices and principles.

Leadership Theories

The belief that leaders are born and not made is recent in the history of leadership theory (Lazzari, Colarossi, & Collins, 2009). Although this theory has been debunked, this belief continues to be held in society's subconscious. An alternative perspective establishes leadership as a practice: "a practice is a cooperative effort among participants who choose through their own rules to achieve a distinctive outcome" (Raelin, 2012, p. 10). The Zapatistas practice a concrete and unique praxis. There is no manual that can be handed out to reach their same level of autonomy or awareness. Their practices are not coupled to any one theory, but instead, "it is built with the everyday experiences of resistance of tens of thousands" (Muñoz Ramírez, 2008, p. 327) Therefore, The following section provides a brief synthesis of different leadership theories that contain elements that could support consideration for a rotating leadership model developed for secondary schools. Each theory provides different elements that are similar to Zapatista practices.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is geared by motivation. Leaders work with their team to identify needed improvements and motivate staff to collaborative success. This motivation causes heightened energy and commitment that transform the organization (Robinson et al., 2008). In educational settings, administrators and teachers can each inspire each other to work towards accomplishing an agreed upon goal. Typical attributes of transformational leadership include: collaboration, dedication (Robinson et al., 2008),

morality, and motivation. Its key values encompass equality, justice, and liberty (Shields, 2010).

Transformational leaders are not passive and tend to contribute most to school effectiveness (Nir & Hameiri, 2015). They are creative, empowering, interactive, passionate, and visionary. A key element of transformational leadership includes relationships. These relationships are not vague nor general acquaintances, but instead purposeful. The leadership team works to build loyal and cohesive teams who share a vision. Additionally, these relationships focus on pedagogical practices, reflection, and growth. Instructional work is constantly at work in transformational educational institutions (Robinson et al., 2008). Additionally, transformational leadership requires a designated or self-appointed leader, while maintaining a hierarchical structure. The interactions and contributions of the team are limited compared to other forms of more collaborative leadership styles. However, its focus on organization can prove beneficial to many groups (Shields, 2010) and identify areas where strong relationships could support rotating leadership.

Transformative Leadership

Although different, transformational and transformative leadership are often confused but not synonymous (Shields, 2010). They both have similar roots but produce distinct fruits. One clear difference is that transformative leadership does not merely understand the inequities inherent in education, but works to challenge them (Shields, 2010). Activism, courage, empowerment, hope, liberation, revolution, and social justice are at the core of transformative leadership (Shields, 2010). “Transformative leadership begins with questions of justice and democracy; it critiques inequitable practices and

offers the promise not only of greater individual achievement but of a better life lived in common with others" (Shields, 2010, p. 559). Transformative leadership emphasizes substantial and equitable social change with its key values being democracy, emancipation, equity, justice, and liberation (Shields, 2010). Taking nothing for granted, transformative leadership is rooted in challenging power and privilege that is creating or perpetuating inequality or injustice (Shields, 2010).

Transformative leadership is founded on the work of Freire (1970/2009). The work of a transformative leader can appear contradictory (Shields, 2010). A transformative leader must work in the space of authority while also working to dismantle typical oppressive tendencies through change and transformation (Shields, 2010). It is a "form of leadership grounded in an activist agenda, one that combines a rights-based theory that every individual is entitled to be treated with dignity, respect, and absolute regard with a social justice theory of ethics that takes these rights to a societal level" (Shields, 2010, p. 571). There are many possibilities for implementing rotation in an already present transformative leadership model. Indeed, transformative leadership demands much of the people who practice it. Unfortunately, this is a relatively newer form of leadership and therefore lacks much study in real-life settings (Shields, 2010) that could describe how rotated elements of leadership could impact practice.

Lateral Leadership

Lateral leadership works in the absence of a well-defined power structure (Kühl et al., 2005). A foundational element includes creating a shared understanding and trust among all team members and a transparent and expressed change of typical power games (Kühl et al., 2005). Its purpose then is to achieve an objective through minimal

compromise and instead influence all parties to one particular intention (Kühl et al., Schnelle & Tillmann, 2005). An intriguing element of this style of leadership involves clear communication with all members of an organization from an egalitarian position. Leaders within this type of leadership style also work to promote cooperation between employees. Additionally, each member of the team must be active participants in lateral leadership (Kühl et al., 2005). Lateral leadership is a flatter hierarchy in that it has less middle management positions between dominants and subordinates. In a lateral leadership organization, there are three essential elements. The first objective involves creating a common conceptual framework. The second objective forms connections between participants' interest. The third objective revolves around creating trust (Kühl et al. et al., 2005).

Lateral leadership provides many positive aspects to effectively functioning organizations. Firstly, lateral leadership works to reject rigid thinking. For example, in moments of conflict, top management is irrelevant when not directly involved. Their conflict resolution efforts produce a shared understanding with the respective members. Kühl et al. (2005) identifies a limiting factor is the confining resources leaders have to exert control over their employees. However, lateral leadership provides many positive aspects, especially in considering the implementation of a rotating element.

Distributed Leadership

Distributed leadership moves away from individual and hierarchical roles to the collective and dispersed. Leadership roles and responsibilities are spread access an assortment of persons, all with a common goal (Hall, Gunter, & Bragg, 2013). It does not limit the power of change and action to one administrator, but instead the power to

engage in change is distributed throughout the entire educational institution (Boylan, 2016). This then creates a systematic web of activity and leadership (Feeney, 2009) where many can influence outcomes (Bligh, Pearce, & Kohles, 2006). Distributed leadership spawned from an effort to minimize the intense workload of the administrator position (Zepke, 2007). Additionally, distributed leadership has been deemed appropriate training for aspiring vice-principals, while additionally redefining the position (Pounder & Crow, 2005).

The literature points to many benefits of distributed leadership. Relationships are a core example of a positive result, for in distributed leadership, people matter (Bligh et al., 2006; Zepke, 2007); relationships, interactions, and building community are core values reciprocated through practices and actions typical in this leadership style (Wells & Klocko, 2015). Members each contribute to the workload depending on personal skills and affinities and, therefore, interact constantly to complete assigned tasks (Bligh et al., 2006; Zepke, 2007). Inherent trust and autonomy are also woven within distributed leadership. Teachers and leaders are granted the independence to make decisions (Hall et al., 2013; Lazzari et al., 2009). Teachers and leaders are entrusted with guiding their own work, thus encouraging initiative. As a result, they are provided with a sense of value by making their work visible (Kaplan & Owings, 1999). Distributed leadership has proven to create effective team building (Wells & Klocko, 2015), by achieving and sustaining high performance (Cangelosi, 2009). Furthermore, distributed leadership thrives on complex and important tasks, so much so that the interdependent teams in distributed leadership tend to outperform individuals under traditional leadership (Bligh et al., 2006).

Despite all its affirmations, distributed leadership is difficult (Kaplan & Owings, 1999) and is not ideal for all environments (Bligh et al., 2006). It brings with it its own struggles and disappointments (Zepke, 2007). Distributed leadership is still judged as being a mere distraction from true educational reform (Hall et al., 2013). Some have criticized the lack of transparency on when such leadership can be learned and practiced throughout a leaders' career path (Bianchini, Maxwell, & Dovey, 2014). Nonetheless, distributed leadership is a clear step toward more collaborative leadership efforts that could accommodate rotated elements in an attempt to address the many hardships of the administrator position.

Leaderful Practice

Leaderful practice comes from the understanding that all members of a particular community can work together towards a goal. It is rooted in the belief that all community members must contribute to the growth and overall well-being of that community (Raelin, 2005). It is termed as "leaderful" because it is full of leaders. "Everyone shares the experience of serving as a leader, not sequentially, but concurrently and collectively" (Raelin, 2005, p. 18). Leaderful communities are an alternative to leadership practices that exaggerate the perceptions of an individual (Raelin, 2014). The community then is not dependent on one but many, for decisions are made depending on responsibility relevancy (Raelin, 2005). This allows for a group to have more than one leader at a time, "operating as leaders together" (Raelin, 2014, p. 66) willingly and naturally.

Leaderful organizations still have managers; they are collaborative, concurrent, and compassionate (Raelin, 2005). The existence of many leaders allows for passionately expressed viewpoints while also maintaining the highest respect for other viewpoints as

they are all equal and valid (Raelin, 2014). Although all perspectives will not be accepted, each will be considered and respected. This honesty and transparency encourage a vulnerability and fearlessness. The open dialogue creates a clear understanding of the group's current standing and progress. Each member may speak for the community and present different and minority positions all with the intent to contribute positively to the community (Raelin, 2005). This dialogue pushes for a leadership beyond the egalitarian, for it acknowledges all viewpoints as no more than possibilities to be considered (Raelin, 2012). Comparatively, leaderful organizations scrutinize the options from every angle, addressing whose interests are being served. Moreover, leaderful practices promote sustainability (Raelin, 2014). While some community members may initiate action, others may work towards it, and still others may finally arrive at completion of a community goal (Raelin, 2005).

Leaderful leadership is revolutionary and admirable; however, it requires complete adaptability (Raelin, 2005). Adaptability is, in some cases, a learned and uncomfortable attribute. Additionally, leaderful practices are not typically ones to emerge organically. They require an individual leader or small group of leaders to present and act as change agents to transform the organization into a leaderful one. Given the premises on which leaderful is based, it is possible to envision a role for rotated leadership in organizations that practice this form of leadership.

Alternative Leadership Models

Throughout the industrial revolution, emphasis on productivity and outcomes surpassed concern for human well-being and fair conditions (Marion & Gonzales, 2014). Likewise, bureaucracy does not typically encourage overall good habits or decisions

among its workers (Raelin, 2014). In fact, these oppressive systems worked to perpetuate a powerless and compliant workforce (Clegg, 1981; Freire,1970/2009). And, under those circumstances, class structure and different types of control in organizations are connected. In other words, classism has commonly been replicated through traditional organizational structures (Clegg, 1981). As a result, union efforts have helped establish child labor laws, overtime restrictions, basic occupational safety, and health regulations. Standards and practices have changed over the past hundred years. In fact, many have come to condemn examples of oppression in the work environment and call for unity and change (Armstrong, 2012). Nonetheless, socialization practices are deeply embedded in culture, practices, and one's deepest being. Furthermore, many organizational structures currently practiced in various organizations have their roots in extremely oppressive systems and continue to reinforce practice that is "antithetical to democratic or socially just" (Armstrong, 2012, p. 709). These implicit and often overlooked habits perpetuate current power structures (Armstrong, 2012).

In some domains, hierarchy, in its basic structural components, is defined as too oppressive (Reed & Levine, 2004). And although once predominant, many now assert that hierarchy can no longer adequately tackle the ever changing conditions of the current leadership landscape (Kühl et al. et al., 2005). Yet, hierarchies remain in many organizational practices and, in some cases, can be partially effective (Kühl et al. et al., 2005). There are groups of people who are working to combat these possibly oppressive elements in systems through alternative leadership styles. Some current organizations encourage workers to be more connected and thus create a more interdependent environment (Raelin, 2014).

The previously listed leadership theories are all noticeable examples of attempts to address and combat oppressive ideals entrenched in leadership foundations and are working to do their part to redefine leadership. Each considers the effect power can have in each relationship and the typically covert power struggles (Kühl et al., 2005). These types of systems are slowly, but persistently breaking down bureaucracy (Raelin, 2014). Rules are the backbone of many institutions because rules can be responsible for control within organizations. And, "each rule represents a distinct and historically evolved principle of organization that is embedded in the actual functioning of the organization"(Clegg, 1981, p. 546). As expected, every change to traditional rules alters common rigid power structures (Kühl et al., 2005). As a result, change to traditional systems, no matter how minimal, is challenging. When the familiar is changed for many people, resistance typically ensues (Kühl et al., 2005). This would likely be the case with a rotating model of leadership, even among alternative models.

Feminist Leadership

A well known oppressive structure embedded in many leadership styles and organizational structures is patriarchy. No matter one's identified gender, all can be perpetrators and challengers of patriarchy. Patriarchy still exists in society and thus has had its impact on organizational structures, and Lazzari et al. (2009) found this to be true specifically in hierarchy. Additionally, when considering leadership and structure, there is an unfortunate habit that encourages dominating instead of working alongside. Instances of '"power with' is devalued and often punished" (Lazzari et al., 2009, p. 349). In contrast, "Feminist leadership, is not concerned with a leader–follower definition, a replication of the domination–subordination social order that exists, but a reorganization

altogether"(Lazzari et al., 2009, p. 352). Furthermore, the general consensus is celebrated. Feminist leadership models do not suggest replacement of all male leaders with those who identify as women to then only follow typical male models of leadership. Gender replacement of leaders does not sufficiently alter the current situation. However, there is something to be learned from the difference in typical female and male leadership dispositions. Tendencies referred to here are related to gendered expectations and socializations that affect power, influence, practices, and methods taken to achieve goals (Lazzari et al., 2009). Considering previously mentioned leader attributes (aggressive, assertive, strong, etc.), it should not be surprising that many women feel that leadership positions are in "stark contrast with 'feminine' ways of life" (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009, p. 233). Yet, socialized societal leadership descriptors are a mere fragment of the overall power structure and masculinized framework that feminist leadership works to challenge (Chin, 2004).

Generally, women are minorities in leadership positions (Chin, 2004), as there are fewer women in administrative positions than men (Adams & Hambright, 2004). Additionally, the secondary education level has seen little change in women's underrepresentation (Marczynski & Gates, 2012). This is not due to lack of interest, for women are as attracted as men to administrator positions (Winter et al., 2003). Adams and Hambright (2004) found women in the classroom considering an administrative position were primarily concerned with losing contact with students along with dealing with difficult parents, teachers, staff, and students. Additionally, limited time and time constraints were among the top inhibiting factors.

The literature does reveal some clear differences in leadership trends between identified women and men. Initially, Oplatka and Tamir (2009) found the initiatory factor for even entering an administrative role was linked to previous administrator retirement, career transition, death, and the like. With women in administrator roles, teachers performed more leadership roles generally connecting to instructional leadership (Wells & Klocko, 2015). Additionally, when identifying successful leaders, the adjectives "nurturing" and "motherly" were used (Reynolds et al., 2008). When allowed and encouraged, persons who identify as women lead from places of vulnerability and empowerment. There is a confidence when acknowledging and accepting shared participation and decision making. According to Browne-Ferrigno (2003), many women reported that current hierarchy structures need to be changed into more collaborative ones. This may seem disadvantageous initially, however, with shared responsibility comes shared accountability (Lazzari et al., 2009).

Sharing accountability makes a narrow focus only on one's own tasks ineffective. Instead a genuine interest flourishes in making sure all are doing their best and contributing where possible to support one another and the overall team goal. However, according to Lazzari et al. women leaders who do address social inequalities can unfortunately have little impact on present oppressive structures (Lazzari et al., 2009). Although the impact of women leadership may not be enough to topple the patriarchal legacy of oppressive structures, women-centered models and models of community organizing offer credible and conceivable alternatives - in some ways making them more amenable to rotating leadership.

Globalization of Leadership

While change in leadership structure has been ongoing throughout different parts of the world since the 1990s and even before then, the recent transition in education within the American public school system is relevant to many (Cheng & Cheung, 2003). Western perceptions and beliefs have typically been highly influential throughout most of the world. At the same time, each part of the world has distinct views on leadership. Eastern philosophies are focused less on ego and more on how their leaders can be of service to their community. Some compelling and common actions include speaking modestly, valuing insight, and a focusing on creating and maintaining harmony (Raelin, 2014). Although there are grassroots and progressive organizations working to thwart Western ideologies and perceived oppressive structural components, examples are few and far in-between. However, one such example is that of the Zapatista movement.

The Zapatistas and Theory

Reading the short history and description of the Zapatistas brings forth ideas shown in previously discussed leadership theories. Each theory grants certain traits relevant and found within the Zapatista practices. Transformational leadership is innately collaborative and fueled by motivation for the greater good, focused on equity, justice, and liberty, all founding principles of the Zapatistas. Activism is ingrained in transformative leadership along with challenging power and privilege, also clearly Zapatista leadership components. The constant and significance of communication from lateral leadership can also be found in Zapatista practices. The basis of distributed leadership is very much connected to some of the collective practices in Zapatista leadership structures. Furthermore, leaderful practice and its concept that everyone is a

leader is very consistent to the beliefs and practices of the Zapatistas. Lastly, the qualities of Feminist leadership are more comparable to Zapatista leadership in its tendencies and collaborative structure. Each of these structures function in their own form to work against the confines of oppressive and hierarchical structures.

Conclusion

All of these theories work to re-examine leadership. The Zapatistas' practices also reevaluate traditional leadership. However, they have kept essential leadership elements they felt appropriate for them. The Zapatistas have been able to identify their necessities and create a structure that best suits those needs. The Zapatistas do not minimize the value of leaders, but they contend that everyone could be a leader. Additionally, they have redefined leaders. The concept that more than one person can be the leader embraces the significance of leadership while also stripping away its elitism.

CHAPTER 3

Literature Review: The Realities of Administrators

The following is a short narrative providing context to the life of an administrator. This story further develops my impetus and eventual journey, piecing together this dissertation and overall dream of revolutionizing educational leadership practices.

My wife and I traveled vastly different primary and secondary educational paths. I went to a small, religious private school for thirteen years. From kindergarten through twelfth grade, I underachieved and perfected the mediocre. I did what was required and expected, nothing more. My wife attended five different elementary schools and eventually landed at Washington Preparatory High School in South Central, Los Angeles. She overachieved and excelled. She was identified from an early age as exceedingly bright and stood out among her peers. In our many discussions comparing and contrasting our academic careers, she described many teachers and school leaders who influenced her and encouraged her to continue her education. Although she mentioned many amazing educators, one who particularly stood out to me was her principal at Washington Preparatory High School, Ms. Marguerite Poindexter LaMotte. Though my wife is a captivating storyteller, there was something more that intrigued and inspired when she reminisced about Ms. LaMotte. From unorthodox academic leadership qualities to an old school tough love, Ms. LaMotte was like no administrator I had ever heard of.

Ms. Marguerite Poindexter LaMotte physically stood in front of Washington Preparatory to welcome her students. She greeted and surveyed incoming students, keeping mental records. She recognized and complimented student achievement also

verifying all students followed the dress code. She had a walkie-talkie in one hand and a handful of cut rope in the other. As it was the 90s, baggy was in. A student with his pants hanging low, shuffled and struggled to pull up his jeans and camouflage himself within the sea of students. He did not make it to too far, for within moments, Ms. LaMotte handed the young man a piece of measured rope substituting the lack of a belt. He could protest and debate, but it would be in vain. Ms. LaMotte had already made up her mind, and Ms. LaMotte's follow through was unfluctuating, checking in throughout the day, and even remembering the following day.

Ms. LaMotte's expectations for her students were all encompassing. She had standards for the student body that reached beyond the academic and extracurricular. Her expectations also focused on the soul: character, principles, actions, and ambitions. Additionally, she was aware of biases and negative images of urban youth that come from underrepresented communities. I had never come across or even heard of such administrator. By that time, I too was an educator, and I instinctively envied everyone who had the chance to work with her. I could tell that, undoubtedly, Ms. LaMotte had a presence. I must clearly state, I never had the privilege to meet Ms. LaMotte. Nonetheless, her example planted the seed of a different type of administrator. I had never pictured myself as an administrator, but if I were to ever be one, I knew I would look to Ms. LaMotte as a role model.

Most professions have a ladder to upward mobility. For many, the principal is the highest position in a school. However, many often overlook the influence of the district, board, and superintendent. In learning more about Ms. LaMotte, I went on to discover that Washington Preparatory was not her final step on the administrative ladder. In

actuality, her final position was eventually on the school board. After executing her appointment of Region Administrator of Operations for Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), she requested a change of post. A career change that could be reasonably identified as a backwards step to the slew of promotions that anteceded. She requested a principalship at George Washington Preparatory High School. Under her auspicious administration, Washington Preparatory earned various academic and extracurricular recognitions and awards. Although she eventually departed from Washington Preparatory, her impact remains and can be witnessed in her students. Ms. LaMotte was elected to the Los Angeles School Board representing South Los Angeles, serving as its longest serving member until her passing in 2013.

Although it may have not been her primary goal, Ms. LaMotte granted this generation a legacy of educational leadership. And a legacy, similar to the job of an educator, plants seeds in gardens one may never get to see (Miranda, 2016). Yet, we continue to plant and sow, hoping our seeds sprout and flower. It is with this in mind educational leaders must be fueled, but sometimes, this fuel is neither sufficient nor sustainable. Educational leaders, like Ms. LaMotte, uphold and take guardianship of generations of students and teachers, yet they can sometimes be abandoned to fend for themselves. Many have endured the assemblage and continue to battle daily for survival, but current leadership practices leave too many on the wayside of excellence. An alternative must be within reach, so the story of Ms. LaMotte is not beholden to a select few, but available to many more students, infinitely impacting lives.

Ms. Marguerite Poindexter LaMotte was extraordinary and singular. She was a legend and walked the walk. However, Ms. LaMotte's tactics may not be encouraged or

completely transmissible in the current educational landscape. The pressures and expectations are greater. Additionally, not everyone can lead the LaMotte way nor do so sustainably.

Administrator Introduction

> Leadership starts with the creation of a vision for the organization or one of its constituent parts, in such a way that others share and own the vision. Making the vision happen is concerned with allowing, encouraging or facilitating others to achieve an optimum performance, both in relation to their own potential and also in relation to the needs and mission of the organization. (Rowley, 1997, p. 1).

This study aims to examine how Zapatista practices can work to alleviate the burden of educational leadership by making it sustainable. Various leadership models were presented in the previous chapter. In addition, the Zapatistas' historical context, current structures, and various practices were discussed. Each leadership model was connected to Zapatista practices. In so doing, it remains clear that although many leadership models possess elements of Zapatismo, neither one encompasses more than a few of their leadership components. Before the argument can be made that Zapatista practices can support a sustainable rotating leadership, the role of an administrator must be analyzed. The following reviews administrators in the K-12 setting to provide context, exposing the dire circumstances many presently endure and establishing the necessity of change. The state of administrators in higher education is also presented as their governance often includes a rotation of leaders. However, as the literature will show, they experience similarly challenging settings. The presentation of these two administrator positions within the same chapter helps to identify that although rotation does assist in limiting longevity of negative impacts one can experience, the position itself is not

sustainable as it is. This chapter works to unpack the existence of an administrator and the realities of their position and how implementing Zapatista practices is the missing element in rotating leadership sustainability and efficiency.

The K-12 Landscape

Being an administrator is an unbelievably rewarding occupation, and yet very few really understand its complexities and responsibilities (Johnson, 2000). In fact, "the academic leader is among the least studied and most misunderstood management positions in America" (Gmelch, 2004, p. 69). However, some do recognize its importance. In this context, the term administrator refers to various roles of educational leaders including: principals, vice principals, and coordinators. For many, administrators are the gatekeepers to the possibilities that education holds; education signifies an opportunity for prosperity, and governments have accordingly worked to enhance educational services (Soemartono, 2014). As is obvious when observing local, state, and national political campaigns, many believe education to be part of the blueprint for national progress - second to teachers, administrators are considered part of that realization.

From Teacher to Administrator

No matter negative perceptions and realities, many teachers move on to become administrators under the pretense they can make a difference on a plethora of issues. Many of these soon to be administrators believe these goals attainable while maintaining balance between their professional and personal life (Yu-kwong & Walker, 2010). Although the path is not as clearly depicted as other traditional professions, there are socialization practices common when transitioning from teacher to administrator. These

practices all lie within a process that can be often nonlinear and chaotic (Armstrong, 2012).

Teachers who transition may be identified as a threat, surrounded by negative peer pressure, and even forms of ostracism (Armstrong, 2012). Although often unbeknownst to the aspiring administrator, the rite of passage to becoming an administrator began at the moment they indicated interest, triggering "a complex psychosocial journey that, over time, forced the novices to reject their teacher values and beliefs and realign themselves with managerial and administrative goals" (Armstrong, 2012, p. 696). This can be identified as a grinding down period. Common and subtle methods of separation including shunning, polite silences, and removal from the teachers' union. More extreme examples included bullying from teachers, attacking personal identity, and isolating the would be administrator. A method of isolation used by both teachers and other administrators discouraged frequenting familiar locations and redefining or severing previous relationships. These practices, for the most part, were accepted and normalized (Armstrong, 2012).

Such initiation processes can demoralize administrators and ensure their compliance. Furthermore, these tactics were used as means to test and emotionally and physically isolate the new administrator, sustaining the line of demarcation between school faculty and leadership. This method worked to isolate the newly appointed administrator from teachers and initiate them to being part of the administration. Often this process had adverse effects (Armstrong, 2012). This transition process can have antagonistic results to say the least, yet it is but one fraction of the entire sometimes grueling procedure by which teachers become administrators.

Administrator Preparation Programs

Many secondary school educational institutions require an additional administrative credential. In California, one can obtain a five-year preliminary administrative credential by satisfying five requirements. The first includes holding a valid prerequisite teaching credential. Secondly, one must either attend a Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) accredited program where the assumption is made that administrators will learn about how to properly become administrators or pass the California Preliminary Administrative Credential Exam verifying knowledge of rules and regulations important for administrative duties. Additionally, one must satisfy the basic skills requirement, complete five years of full-time experience working in schools, and verify employment in an administrative position. Once completed, the preliminarily credentialed administrator must prove two years of successful experience in a full-time administrative position, finish a Commission-approved Administrative Services induction program, and also acquire the program sponsor's recommendation (Administrative Services Credential for Individuals prepared in California, 2014, pp. 1-3).

Generally, there is a sentiment that administrator preparation programs do not fulfill the needs of would be administrators (Armstrong, 2012; Gulcan, 2012). Commonly, some preparation programs emphasize theoretical and historical content, where the concrete would perhaps be more helpful (Petzko, 2008). Furthermore, Gulcan (2012) found that administrators were typically competent in general administrative issues but lacking understanding in issues like educational psychology and new instruction methods. Additionally, administrators felt unprepared for school diversity and

sociopolitical challenges (Armstrong, 2012). These findings have not gone unnoticed, for many are calling for reform (Petzko, 2008; Shoho & Barnett, 2010) and some evidence suggests institutions are pushing beyond the expected and reimagining administrator preparation (Davis & Darling-Hammond, 2012). Nonetheless, it is clear that preparation programs need improvement, for many current administrators are ill-prepared for their position (Shoho & Barnett, 2010), and, specifically, many are not equipped to adequately deal with the challenges of attaining school improvement (Feeney, 2009) Moreover, some universities may find it challenging to adapt their preparation programs because the position and its responsibilities have recently drastically widened.

Divided - Teachers and Administrators

Currently, school faculty and leadership no longer regard each other as peers, but instead exist in a seemingly never-ending whirlwind of conflict (Okutan, 2014). Such conflict can create a hostile work environment where administrators, once motivated by possibility and a higher purpose, now are bound by doing what they are told to do rather than what they were trained to do (Militello et al., 2015). Additionally, an administrator can be known for being cold and insensitive (Johnson, 2000), and teachers as combative and hypersensitive. This dynamic creates a situation where both positions work against each other instead of with each other. Although negative connotations associated with the administrator position (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009) may be because administrators have been hardened by the administrator life (Johnson, 2000), these perceptions can cause some teacher hesitancy when dealing with and even considering transitioning to become administrators (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009).

Teachers similarly cannot fully grasp the pressures and expectations placed on administrators nor understand those who willingly go after and accept a job with ambiguous and ever-changing responsibilities (Johnson, 2000). Even those teachers who are in the introductory process of becoming an administrator, they themselves do not identify their administrative position "at the high end of the scale" (Winter et al., p, 310, 2003). The position can offer increased pay (Winter et al., 2003) and prestige along with a fulfillment of their calling and values (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009). However, the perks are not often deemed worthy of the cost. The administrator position has been characterized as overwhelming, politically embedded, and high energy and more importantly incompatible with lifestyle and balance (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009). It often comes with added job duties, thus longer work hours (Winter et al., 2003).

The Current Context of a Principal

By and large, educational leaders do not come into the field merely to procure career or financial advancement; they have hefty goals for student impact and developing the practices of others (Sorenson, 2007). Normally, they have good intentions. Lamentably, principals, unlike teachers, have very little opportunity to grapple with the metamorphosis from teacher to administrator, as they are usually expected to come into the position already as experts (Shoho & Barnett, 2010). It is, however, commonly believed that principals learn more the longer they are working in the position (Shoho & Barnett, 2010) This can often lead a viscous condition where students and faculty eventually pay for the inadequacies of unprepared (Petzko, 2008) and overworked principals (Abu-Hussain & Essawi, 2014).

Principal skills and responsibilities. Principals are the leaders of their school and require particular skills to succeed. In some ways, the school administrator can be compatible with a company's chief executive officer (CEO) in the business world (Raelin, 2012). Similarly, CEOs and principals carry the weight of their organization's successes and failures, and both are responsible for the large-scale vision and scope of their individual organizations (Onorato, 2013). Likewise, principals are in charge of creating and marketing a school's master plan to the community and school stakeholders, understanding that sharing the school vision allows for stronger instructional leadership qualities (Gulcan, 2012). Principals are additionally expected to anticipate future expectations, instigate change, and be involved with appropriate change (Raelin, 2012). Furthermore, relationships between schools can be parallel to corporate mergers and takeovers (Boylan, 2016). Notwithstanding their similarities, there are obviously clear distinctions between a business CEO and a school principal.

The principal position is largely identified as being technical with an administrative focus (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009). These responsibilities can even be described as the focal point of their work (Nelson, de la Colina, & Boone, 2008). Generally, administrators are responsible for ensuring an orderly and supportive environment (Robinson et al., 2008). This includes many operational duties. One extensive responsibility is that of the budget which includes resource mobilization and resourcefulness (Foster & Wiseman, 2015; Oplatka & Tamir, 2009). Another notable operational duty is knowing and abiding by legal requirements. Additionally, human relations are a key and commonplace expectation of all administrators, including hiring, firing, and supervising faculty and staff (Gulcan, 2012). In a meta-analysis studying the

impact of different types of leadership on student outcomes, Robinson et al. (2008) found that student achievement was higher in schools where that particular administrator had appointed a greater percentage of their current staff. This is a specific example of how influential administrators and their decisions can be.

Principals are not only liable for the technicalities of the school operations, they are additionally expected to contribute to the personal and professional growth of teachers (Abu-Hussain & Essawi, 2014; Okutan, 2014). Although many principals view effective instruction as primarily the responsibility of the teacher (Wells & Klocko, 2015), administrators are typically the instructional leaders at their school site. Indeed, teachers identify the significance of school administrators in relation to instructional activities (Gulcan, 2012). They are responsible for learning about and bringing in new teaching methods and techniques. As research is constantly revolving, principals must implement these new approaches year round (Gulcan, 2012). Such instructional leadership provides for an environment where school goals can be achieved, where the administrator is present and knowledgeable enough to be a resource for instructional advice (Robinson et al., 2008). Administrators are also expected to set clear and attainable goals for their staff to engage, focus, and mobilize, minimizing burnout and cynicism (Robinson et al., 2008), and necessitating strong collaborative and instructional skills (Kaplan & Owings, 1999). These duties are all general expectations of administrators in their quest for improving valued student outcomes (Robinson et al., 2008).

The principal position expanded. The role of the administrator has become more complex (Abu-Hussain & Essawi, 2014; Gulcan, 2012; Onorato, 2013; Pounder & Crow, 2005; Shoho & Barnett, 2010; Wells & Klocko, 2015). An extension of the position has been attributed to guaranteeing higher levels of learning for all students (Wells & Klocko, 2015). In other words, increasing accountability and workload (Abu-Hussain & Essawi, 2014). This expansion has stretched the position to its maximum (Kaplan & Owings, 1999). Changes in accountability additionally result in administrators focusing their already limited time to satisfying external obligations such as fulfilling federal and state requirements, thereby denying many administrators the space to concentrate their efforts on student achievement (Onorato, 2013). This alone suggests reasons for a change in administrator responsibilities and sharing accountability (Nir & Hameiri, 2015). Such a shift is not only challenging for newly hired administrators (Shoho & Barnett, 2010), but also for veteran educational leaders. In particular, schools have reported that it is more challenging to hire and retain administrator positions (Pounder & Crow, 2005). Clearly, "changes in accountability have ramifications in teaching, leading, and learning in today's schools" (Militello et al., 2015, p. 195).

Principal stressors. Stressors exist in every occupation. Schools in general can be highly stressful environments. However, Sorenson (2007) school administration is additionally identified as one of the top ten stressful jobs. For more than three decades, researchers have studied stress associated with the administrator position (Wells & Klocko, 2015). In researching stress within educational settings, Sorenson (2007) found key factors causing stress in current schools: avoiding errors, a demanding supervisor, a disgruntled colleague, high-stakes testing, an irate parent, and the pressure to complete

tasks. Considering the duties reported previously, one of the more stressful work-associated duties is in relation to finances, for many recognize budgetary constraints can hinder success accomplishing academic goals (Wells & Klocko, 2015). Moreover, there is an extensive list of administrator stressors. In their study, Wells and Klocko (2015) identified 15 stressors: "loss of personal time, feelings of being overwhelmed with job demands, volume of paperwork, reports to state and district, board of education presentations, dealing with changing demographics, general loss of joy in doing this work, increased performance expectations from central office, insufficient time to 'get the job done,' student discipline, responding to the new demands of the curriculum, responding to student test score results, providing a vision for school improvement, constant interruptions, lunchroom and building supervision" (pp. 326-327). In particular, the same study found key stressors for urban administrators within six categories: constant interruptions, feeling overwhelmed with the job, increased expectations from central office, insufficient time, loss of personal time, and volume of paperwork (Wells & Klocko, 2015). In a comparable study, Nelson et al. (2008) found that budget management, curriculum knowledge, lack of policy knowledge, timely completion of paperwork, and time management were common administrator stressors.

Likewise, there are documented stressors in association with challenges regarding shaping or changing school climate which can lead to possible political issues (Shoho & Barnett, 2010). Challenges with community, including parent and external community, issues can also be time consuming and causes of stress (Shoho & Barnett, 2010). Despite a lack of time to focus on budgetary challenges, Shoho and Barnett (2010) identified dealing with the school budget and its consequences as a primary concern. Furthermore,

dealing with difficult personnel proved taxing on many accounts. Teachers who were designated as not having the students' best interest in mind accounted for one of the greatest challenges specific to administrative personnel (Shoho & Barnett, 2010).

Some schools work to minimize the stress endured by their faculty and leadership, while others exacerbate the situation. "Some school systems actually create a culture characterized by tension, stress, and anxiety" (Sorenson, 2007, p. 11). Examples of this includes: creating a list of excessively high expectations, emphasizing continuous reforms and improvements, establishing unrealistic pressures to perform, imposing excessively tight controls, and establishing extraordinarily demanding instructional standards focused on increasing student achievement (Sorenson, 2007). Some of the symptoms of these stressors and stressful work conditions include decreased productivity, educator burnout, increased absenteeism, higher turnover rate, and even serious health conditions (Sorenson, 2007). The mere fear of health concerns have been reason enough for some to disregard the administrative position. Headaches, high blood pressure, and thyroid gland problems can be results of the administrator position (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009). Resigning as an administrator or enduring the burden should not be the only options, for all educational leaders.

The principal predicament. The expansion of the principal position has caused some inadvertent effects. Current climate may indicate that the role is too much for any one person to execute effectually and sustainably without significant personal sacrifice. A rejuvenation period may prove beneficial for educational leaders. This rejuvenation has previously been unlikely due to the present leadership structures. Hierarchical models rely on one to lead, carrying the burdens and providing no rest. An alternative approach

that addresses hierarchy can grant rest without the cost of impeding personal and professional progress along with the success of the educational institution and its students.

External and internal factors including responsibilities, position expansion, and stressors can create an antagonistic and stationary existence. However, expectations and stressors often lead to educator burnout (Sorenson, 2007). The typical reaction to all the demands of the position fall within the following three options: soldier on and measure up, resign, or face termination (Sorenson, 2007). Additionally, a better understanding of the preparation, transition, and expectations of administrators can help in properly acquiring educational leaders. Regrettably, there seems to be an accepted shortage of qualified applicants (Petzko, 2008; Winter et al., 2003) along with a high turnover rate (Shoho & Barnett, 2010). This is a serious concern with possibly detrimental effects. However, this shortage is not consistent with the number of teachers who continue to enroll in preparation programs (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Furthermore, qualified personnel do exist (Winter et al., 2003). Instead, this may speak to the decreased attractiveness of the position (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009). Particularly, working conditions may be a significant component negating any interest in the position (Petzko, 2008). Even if already an administrator, turnover continues to be high, affecting school stability and outcomes (Shoho & Barnett, 2010). All of these mentioned factors point to responsibilities that are beyond expanding past the abilities of one person. Such a tremendous burden eventually cascades to assistant principals. As will be discussed next, some research exists noting that the assistant principal job is equally complex and similarly has little flexibility for expansion (Oleszewski et al., 2012).

The Current Context for Assistant Principals

> Teachers love to hate them and principals hate to love them. They bear the burden of student contempt as they single-handedly hold the line, thin as it is, between student anarchy and school policy. They are the gray ones in cheap dress shoes, the intermediaries between "them" and "us"; the entry-level administrators working without a real office, like head teachers without a classroom (Johnson, 2000, p. 85).

The administrator context presented above additionally is or will be transferable to assistant principals. However, assistant principals undergo distinct circumstances specific to their position. It should firstly be noted that research on vice-principals is limited compared to other topics (Kwan & Walker, 2012). Therefore, little is really known and understood about the practices that make a good assistant principal (Militello et al., 2015). Despite some literature additionally identifying the position not only as under-researched, but also underutilized (Oleszewski et al., 2012), the assistant administrator can affect student achievement and safety (Muñoz & Barber, 2011), clear imperatives within the educational realm.

Assistant Principals' Skills and Responsibilities. Similarly to their superiors, the assistant principal position carries with it many expectations. However, the assistant principal is a middle position, for they are teachers and supervisors for teachers while also being subordinates to the principal causing a delicate balance of working with and satisfying both parties (Schermuly, Schermuly, & Meyer, 2011). Assistant principals are the persons on the ground, dealing first-hand with students and school policy (Johnson, 2000). Unfortunately, the definition and job description of an assistant principal is

expansive for it can vary depending on the school, principal, and district. Job descriptor alterations can even range within the requirements of the day (Muñoz & Barber, 2011). They can have minor influence over management style and are, in many cases, susceptible to the whims of the principals, determining their part in general decision making processes (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009).

Assistant principals are also responsible for administrative and clerical duties (Kwan & Walker, 2012; Oplatka & Tamir, 2009). Ordinarily, the assistant principal is in charge of school culture focusing on safety and discipline (Kaplan & Owings, 1999). Some even regard student discipline as the position's main responsibility (Pounder & Crow, 2005). These responsibilities focus on order (Militello et al., 2015) and can be comprised of identifying and implementing school policy (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009), coordinating transportation, managing attendance issues, handling discipline (Muñoz & Barber, 2011), mediating student conflict, and patrolling halls (Kaplan & Owings, 1999). Likewise, assistant principals are responsible for the logistics of an efficient school (Kwan & Walker, 2012). Dealing with school and community relations, managing supplies and textbooks, maintaining records for extracurricular activities, monitoring facilities, scheduling classes, and supervising custodial and support personnel are some of the typical duties of an assistant principal (Muñoz & Barber, 2011). Additionally, roles can include: coach, communicator, evaluator, program developer, teacher, and vision co-designer (Kaplan & Owings, 1999).

Although some teachers can view assistant principals as non-instructional leaders, (Kaplan & Owings, 1999) in fact in some scenarios, they can have limited instructional leadership responsibility (Pounder & Crow, 2005). As direct teacher supervisors,

assistant principals are also are responsible for the quality of education focusing on student achievement (Muñoz & Barber, 2011). Assistant principals often work directly with teachers to develop new curricula (Muñoz & Barber, 2011) and offer guidance through instructional leadership (Kaplan & Owings, 1999). Assistant principals are also normally in charge of teacher and classroom evaluations (Muñoz & Barber, 2011; Pounder & Crow, 2005) while also ensuring the implementation of the principal's values into action (Oplatka & Tamir 2009). Common understanding also identifies an assistant principal as an overall aide to the principal (Muñoz & Barber, 2011). However, the expectations of an assistant principal are customarily broader and more vague than that of a principal.

Ambiguity of the role of assistant principal. The expansion of the administrator position has contributed in increasing the ambiguity of the job description. The job descriptions of all administrators typically have poorly defined roles and responsibilities (Supovitz, 2015). Additionally, both the principal and vice-principal often share roles (Armstrong, 2012); this can lead to less structured job descriptions. More specifically, however, most job descriptions include the phrase "other duties as assigned by the principal," which is remarkably vague and can apply to many seemingly infinite tasks (Johnson, 2000). The specificities of the of the position can be distinct in each state, district, school, and even from one year to the next (Oleszewski et al., 2012). The imprecise job description is even more surprising when one takes into account how critical an assistant principal can be to the success of a school (Oleszewski et al., 2012) with regards to student achievement and school safety (Muñoz & Barber, 2011).

Assistant principal stressors. The stress of assistant principals can be more impactful because, as previously mentioned, they are on middle ground (Schermuly, et al., 2011) where they can enact minimal change and are held to the expressed wishes of their principal (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009). This puts them in a position where they carry many of the responsibilities of the principal without many of the benefits of holding a true and respected leadership position. The ambiguity in definition, responsibilities, role, and expectations (Oleszewski et al., 2012; Oplatka & Tamir, 2009) can be troubling and provide for oversight and even conflict (Schermuly et al., 2011). Generally, there seems to be a clear misalignment between the ideal and actual responsibilities of the assistant principal (Kwan & Walker, 2012; Militello et al., 2015). This dissonance has been widely studied since the 1980s (Kwan & Walker, 2012).

In a study looking specifically at the disparities between 56 administrators' idealized practice versus their day-to-day responsibilities and actions, Militello et al. (2015) found that assistant principals entered the position expecting to practice goal orientated leadership, instructional focused management, and culture generating leadership. However, their actual practices tended to be limited to educational management, learning outcomes, and relationship centered. These findings are not confined to this study or even this country. In similar educational settings, Kwan and Walker (2012) identified three key instances in which the gap between the idealized and actual practices of assistant principals were large and less than ideal. The first of these included resource management which included school resource and financial management. The outcomes of that report expressed the respondents had little time to focus on resource management despite believing it required more time. The second

response revolved around leader and teacher growth and development. In fact, the respondents spent the second least amount of time on this responsibility regardless of its importance. The third large gap was in teaching, learning, and curricula. These two studies by Militello et al and Kwan and Walker identified the dissonance between the ideal and actual practices of an assistant principal

In addition to the ambiguity and the dissonance with the role, assistant principals may experience supplemental stress based on the organization structure in which they work. Many assistant principals are beholden to the expressed wishes and demands of the principal, and this, depending on the relationship, between the two can cause a rift and stress. Assistant principals are, in many cases, expected to do what they are told, without discussion or option (Militello et al., 2015). Such a scenario can place assistant principals in a situation where they comply and stay silent (Armstrong, 2012). Job security can force obedience and silence. Silence and compliance further reinforces the organizational structure and expectations. A stereotype continues to be perpetuated of the all-capable, tireless, and heroic assistant principal stuck in cycle that can cause lapse in judgment in an already stretched position (Armstrong, 2012). Some feel so burdened and trapped that they accuse the system of setting them up for failure and express desperate pleas of leaving the position they once aspired to (Armstrong, 2012).

It is not surprising that assistant principals also suffer from health risks. In a study of eight newly appointed assistant principals in a similar educational setting in Canada, Armstrong (2012) noted, “the physical and psychological stress caused by long working hours, coupled with the inability to address chronic and ongoing crises, led to the development of poor dietary, sleep, and exercise habits that resulted in increased blood

pressure, headaches, and fatigue" (Armstrong, 2012, pp. 705-706). Emotional exhaustion can increase days absent from work and overall job dissatisfaction (Schermuly, et al., 2011). All the above clearly distinguish the assistant principal position as a very stressful one without including self-imposed stressors.

Commonly, the assistant principal position is a stepping stone towards the principal position and hence a transition from teacher to administrator (Muñoz & Barber, 2011; Pounder & Crow, 2005). This places the assistant principal as a beginner. Unfortunately, beginners may prove insufficient in many capacities due to a lack of training and experience. The lack of preparation mentioned previously can lead the assistant principal to feel incompetent and motivate them to self-train (Armstrong, 2012). Oleszewski et al. (2010) found that assistant principals who participated in district professional developments assisted in the leadership of schools with confidence, evaluation abilities, and policy enforcement. Although commendable, this distinct professional development can cause some stress (Yu-kwong & Walker, 2010). Additionally, this can augment the challenges experienced by the assistant principal and, in turn, decrease job satisfaction (Yu-kwong & Walker, 2010). Many principals learn about their responsibilities and additional knowledge they require for their position on the job (Shoho & Barnett, 2010). One can assume the same with assistant principals. There is an assumption that the more they are in the position, the more they learn about what they do not know, providing many an undisclosed amount of unfamiliar knowledge. Predictably, self training attempts can lead to longer work days and can increase physical and mental strains (Armstrong, 2012).

The assistant principal predicament. Many larger public schools do have more than one assistant principal, but with the reproduction of more charter and alternative schools, this is slowly fading. Like the principal position, assistant principals also have a heavy workload with minimal opportunity for balance. However, the position of the vice principal, in some ways, can even be more challenging considering its expansion and ambiguity.

The assistant principal job is certainly not without merit and moments of satisfaction. Dealing with students who have had previous limited success has proven to be extremely meaningful and joyous (Shoho & Barnett, 2010). Likewise, those who were identified as more committed to their jobs, experienced high job satisfaction. Commitment included those who found their work energizing and rewarding. They additionally possessed higher senses of worthiness and retained a positive attitude towards their position (Yu-kwong & Walker, 2010). Furthermore, Pounder and Crow (2005) found that assistant principals who were responsible for creating learning environments and worked to close the achievement gap found their position more meaningful. Moreover, the school environment can also influence the assistant principal position in more harmonious school settings, job satisfaction increased (Yu-kwong & Walker, 2010). Assistant principals who also viewed school improvement as attainable through their own practice also found their jobs to be more satisfying (Yu-kwong & Walker, 2010).

Despite the intensity of the position and high personal costs, assistant principals can be highly committed individuals. However, no matter the commitment, the expectations for the assistant principal are far too many for one person with the current

school size (Militello et al., 2015). Typically, when assistant principals experience more stress, they also endure less job satisfaction. Subsequently, decreased job satisfaction and poor health can directly affect an assistant principal's abilities and thus, threaten school operations (Schermuly, et al., 2011). At the same time, the assistant principal can be a vital element for school improvement (Oleszewski et al., 2012). Considering this, one would assume the well-being of assistant principals might be at the forefront of policy makers and education reformist; yet, it is not (Schermuly, et al., 2011). Alternatively, one might abandon the familiar and meticulously re-imagine the possible. "School districts and regulatory bodies need to ask critical questions about the purpose of the vice-principal role and to determine how it can be transformed into a position that guarantees equity for new administrators and their communities" (Armstrong, 2012, p. 711).

The literature shows that many administrators in the K-12 landscape are in overwhelming structures and are inundated with unrealistic expectations. These conditions can encourage one to re-imagine both the structure and expectations. Whether through rotation, sharing responsibilities, or integrating different practices, there exists an opportunity to restore and revive. Both of which can be achieved through an alternative leadership model that would go beyond traditional approaches. Higher education institutions do implement a rotation a leadership through shared governance. Unfortunately, many department chairs experience similar frustrations.

Higher Education Institutions

Although both encompass institutions of learning, the K-12 landscape differs significantly from the higher learning context. Typically, department chairs do carry many of the same responsibilities as K-12 administrators. In higher education, the

department structure is multifaceted (McArthur, 2002). The structure, although still hierarchical, rotates from one member of the faculty to another. Many administrators within higher education institutions unfortunately still sufferer from similar afflictions to their K-12 colleagues. Nonetheless, their process of rotation may provide insight regarding how a similar structure could work in a K-12 setting and provide a better sense of how Zapatista practices can work to further sustain this alternative method of leadership.

There are clear distinctions between department leaders within the higher education setting and K-12 administrators. These differences can include the interactions and relationships between students, faculty, and staff; role expectations; and demographics to name a few. Nonetheless, there are numerous similarities. Both are administrative positions requiring leadership and managerial responsibilities centralized on the overall academic achievement of their students. In addition, current times, financial restraints, and policies present particular challenges for higher education (Hargrove, 2003) as they do for the K12 administrators (Wells & Klocko, 2015). And, similarly, higher education institutions have more recently been branded as undergoing a great leadership crisis (Gmelch & Burns, 1994; M. Snow, personal communication, October 19, 2017).

From Faculty to Department Chair

Administrative credentials in higher education institutions are not required or common. The role can be defined as ambivalent and unattractive (McArthur, 2002). Those in this leadership role are often caught between the two facets of their identity - faculty and administrator (Gmelch & Burns, 1994). In fact, many faculty members do not

strive to become department chairs (McArthur, 2002). Additionally, department chairs can be viewed with positive regard for they sacrificed their teaching, research, and writing to be of service by performing the responsibilities of the administrator position (Gmelch & Burns, 1994). Because the process of becoming an administrator in higher education institutions is distinct from the K-12 environment, the relationship between faculty and administrators can be far more symbiotic. That is, the interchangeability of the positions motivates a deeper awareness and empathy that typically cannot present in K-12 setting.

Department Chair Preparation

The transition process from faculty to administrator requires little systematic training (Henkel, 2002). Furthermore, Smith, Rollins, and Smith (2012) posit that many department chairs' prior experience "had been as successful professors with primary responsibilities for teaching, conducting research, and providing service to other professionals in their fields" (p. 60). Many department chairs enter the position with very little managerial experience and without previous administrative experience (Gmelch & Burns, 1994; Hancock, 2007; Smith et al., 2012). Additionally, many do not fully comprehend the ambiguity and complexity of the department chair role (Gmelch & Burns, 1994). Those who do feel confident and prepared to enter administration typically had previous leadership experience (Hancock, 2007). Unfortunately, leadership development for new and incoming department chairs is not ordinarily provided by the higher educational institution (Smith et al., 2012). However, some are required to attend department chair trainings (M. Snow, personal communication, October 19, 2017) indicating a developing realization that department chairs need more knowledge to better

execute the position. Nonetheless, lack of basic preparation can be cumbersome. Although there are contentions regarding how to best prepare department chairs for their position, many believe some change is required.

The Current Context for Department Chairs

Leadership in academic institutions is unique in its own right. "[T]he department chair position has been characterized as having no parallel in business or industry" (Gmelch, 2004, pp. 71-72). The basic organizational structure in higher education institutions is unique in that faculty members rotate into leadership positions and then return to their faculty position, often completing their years in higher education as faculty. The time spent as department chair can vary, often with the option to extend the term, but respecting a set maximum term limit (Smith et al., 2012) and then transition back into full time faculty member status (Hancock, 2007). Additionally, many higher education institutions operate within university governance which includes "committees focused on specific facets of operation" (Hancock, 2007, p. 312). These committees are typically faculty led and remain consistent despite leadership rotation. The department chair is the link between the deans and associate deans with the faculty, working to unite their different professional agendas to meet the overarching goals and missions (McArthur, 2002). Administrators in higher education are typically in positions where they wear two hats, one as the department chair and one as a faculty member, splitting their time between their administrative duties and teaching (Gmelch, 2004).

Department chairs' skills and responsibilities. Similar to their counterparts in the K-12 arena, department chairs are expected to handle a variety of tasks and additionally must be adaptable (Bowman, 2002). A comprehensive perspective of their

leadership places department chairs in positions where they can influence vision and quality of instruction within their departments (Hancock, 2007). Department chairs can be identified as generalists, in that they must be able to address a variety of issues, interact with many different types of people and positions, and maintaining a broad point of view (Gmelch, 2004).

Balancing all the distinct responsibilities and roles of a department chair within their limited time is perhaps the most valuable skill (Gmelch, 2004). Many times, they must approach various circumstances with innovative solutions that remain within the specified limitations (Hargrove, 2003). Department chairs have to attend and report at many meetings within the wider scope of their institution (Gmelch & Burns, 1994). A portion of their job description focuses on policies, paperwork, and processes (Bowman, 2002). They are constantly balancing between university mission and requirements with faculty duties and values (Gmelch, 2004). Certain specific responsibilities are highly bureaucratic (Hancock, 2007) - serving external and political relationships (Gmelch, 2004) which may require delicate negotiations and maneuvering. This managerial element also encompasses conflict resolution between students and faculty in a multiple of possible and intricate webs (Hancock, 2007).

Besides managerial, the position of the department chair can be instructional. Hancock (2007) found that some of the most rewarding elements of the department chair were the ability to mentor junior faculty. Thus, performance coaching is an added role for many department chairs (Gmelch, 2004). The chair also has the responsibility of serving students and, therefore, being available to hear their comments, concerns, and questions (Hargrove, 2003). Availability to students offers department chairs' opportunity to

nurture students in their own personal and professional growth (Hancock, 2007). However, the requirements of the positions generally take precedent and can, unfortunately, hinder the department chair's professional growth and research productivity (Hancock, 2007). Nonetheless, department chairs are still expected to engage in their own research and scholarship while also engaging in classroom teaching (Gmelch, 2004).

The expansion and ambiguity of the department chair position. Similar to many other academic leaders (Gmelch, 2004), the department chair position is clouded by ambiguity (Gmelch & Burns, 1994). At times, the chain of command can be convoluted, for who is in charge of making certain decisions can be uncertain (Henkel, 2002). In addition, the department chair can feel bifurcated between their faculty and administrative identities causing clashes and frustration (Gmelch, 2004). Both expansion and ambiguity can readily act as impediments for successful leadership practice within higher education institutions.

Department chair administrative stressors. One of the more commonly referred to stressors includes balance (Gmelch, 2004). Department chairs must firstly balance their personal lives with their administrative duties (Gmelch & Burns, 1994). They must also balance all the multifaceted demands of their position as department chair with their own professional development. Plenty of faculty and department chairs regard the position not as a career advancement, but instead, as a "career disruption" (Hancock, 2007, p. 306). Many, in fact, initially view the position as a burden because of the great personal sacrifice required (Hancock, 2007). In particular, Henkel (2002) mentions three conflicting demands: "those of academic and administrative work; the flow of external

demands or crises competing with strategic responsibilities; and the desire to nurture individuals as against the need to change their departments" (p. 37).

For many department chairs, Hancock (2007) found their life quality impacted. Customarily, they experience decreased personal and professional time and increased stress (Hancock, 2007). The position can be the opposite of family friendly (Gmelch, 2004). Additionally, department chairs must transition from a rather isolated profession to a more public one where much of their days and actions are open to public "scrutiny, critique, comment, and review" (Gmelch, 2004, p. 70).

The unknown and inability to focus on one task can be overwhelming, frustrating, and prove for slow headway because department chairs have very heavy workloads (Gmelch & Burns, 1994). Their workload includes the oversight of the daily department operations, aiming for capable and effective coordination of its various entities. For instance, budgets can be an opportunity to progress toward overarching goals; however, tensions can arise with many factors when department chairs endeavor to manage their own budgets (Henkel, 2002).

Faculty and chair relationships can generally be less conflicting; however, department chairs can experience colleague estrangement (Henkel, 2002). In a survey of 800 department chairs, Gmelch and Burns (1994) identified that the conflict mediating role of the department chair was the most stressful of all their performed tasks and duties. This particular stress was intense for many chairs that it became a deciding factor whether or not to serve an additional term (Gmelch & Burns, 1994).

Department chairs transition. The transition process from faculty to department chair and from department chair returning to a faculty role is an adjustment

(Smith et al., 2012). In fact, Smith et al. (2012) found in their research that many department chairs receive no support in their transition process from chair back to faculty member. When returning as a faculty member, many fear their ability in regaining their previous level of productivity in their own research and practice (Hancock, 2007). Transitioned faculty must secure funds for research projects while also picking up from where they left off. Many have to work to become current in their teaching practice and service (Smith et al., 2012). Logistically, some department chairs identify the salary increase as a department chair and guaranteed pay reduction when returning to their faculty position as a disquieting concern (Smith et al., 2012). Although they have transitioned out of the position, many department chairs still endure administrative worries. Some of the lingering apprehensions include: “concerns about the future of their departments; staying out of the way of the new chair; responding to a new chair’s decisions; and finding a suitable replacement while staying out of the politics of the department" (Smith et al., 2012, p. 58). Additionally, throughout the transition process from faculty to department chair to faculty again, one can experience relationship shifts with faculty peers which at times result in a rift (Hancock, 2007).

The department chair predicament. Throughout their term, department chairs must work to define academic leadership for themselves and their leadership practice (Gmelch, 2004). Although many enter the role reluctantly and endure great personal cost, many do take the job because it serves a sense of duty (Hancock, 2007). Three specific motivating factors include: accomplishing larger professional goals, serving others, and supporting faculty and students. (Smith et al., 2012). Once in the role, department chairs’ view of themselves may be modified (Gmelch, 2004). The opportunity to enact actual

and concrete change is additionally enticing to many. Some find the appointment as final yet positive (Henkel, 2002). Although career advancement and pay increase are helpful, they are not seemingly substantial motivations (Gmelch, 2004). Unfortunately, in many instances, the rewards do not match the demands (Hancock, 2007). In sum, the department chair position presents a different form of educational leadership in that it rotates, yet it is still filled with much personal sacrifice and cost. This particular setting does allow for possible transferable elements and suggestions for developing rotating leadership for a K-12 setting.

Administrator Conclusion

In a bulletin regarding the responsibilities of the administrator position, Johnson (2000) outlines four rules all administrators should consider. The rules are: 1) know your and everyone's job description; 2) respect everyone; 3) trust your instincts; and 4) remember, that no matter what happens, you are going to eat lunch tomorrow. Although seemingly lighthearted, these rules provide a good synopsis of guidelines administrators can follow to maintain drive, perspective, and sanity in a stressful environment. However, "just getting by" should not be an acceptable measurement of administrators' proficiency, effectiveness, and health.

Clearly, the educational leadership roles are a heavy burden to bear. There are those who are able to push past the struggle and endure the position for a considerable amount of time, but some do not make it. Many are cast aside, failing to adequately fulfill their administrator duties. For those who strive to lead, the decision between succeeding as an administrator with typically high personal sacrifice versus refusing an administrative role to minimize personal sacrifice is no longer acceptable. These options

between perceived success and failure should no longer be applicable. Leaders should no longer soldier on sacrificing more than their share. Developing democratic, supportive, and humane learning communities must be fundamental (Armstrong, 2012). An alternative model could prove beneficial.

The previously discussed leadership models in Chapter 2 all provide alternative leadership to traditional formats that work to address the in sustainability many confront in the administrator position. Although many have been implemented, each seems to be lacking in some way or another. Perhaps it is not a question of one or the other, but a practice that combines and molds based on the needs of schools and communities. One clear possibility is rotation. Rotation in higher education institutions is more efficient because administrators need only endure the sacrifice for limited time. However, implementing Zapatista practices could maximize sustainability for this leadership model, for such practices create a culture that honors the humanity of leaders and honors their work.

The following methodology chapter explains the research practices used and referred to throughout the study to explore how Zapatista practices indeed could be applied to secondary school leadership. The chapter describes the qualitative methodology for the study, explaining the research design, inspiring methodologies, and personal epistemology.

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CHAPTER 4

Study Design and Methodology

This study focused on identifying: (a) What are key Zapatista transferrable cultural practices and principles that can be applied to secondary schools leadership; and (b) what are important elements of Zapatista leadership rotation practices that can be implemented for sustainable rotating leadership structure for secondary schools. This chapter includes a presentation of the research design, a backdrop for the specifics of the study, and the methods employed.

This study was a qualitative study, for it collected and analyzed data related to human behavior and functioning (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Grounded theory was the overall research design that guided this study. Most basically, grounded theory is a method of research that develops a concept grounded in its found data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It is a theory that explores and seeks (Kempster & Parry, 2011). The purpose of using grounded theory for this study was to conceptualize how the rotation of leadership with particular Zapatista practices can create a sustainable and efficient leadership structure for secondary schools. Most current leadership theories do not apply to the purpose of this study because they are rooted in existing structures and assumptions about the way leadership happens in schools. The Zapatistas have worked since their inception to rupture themselves from colonized and severely oppressive surroundings and have created one of the few places globally currently practicing sustainable autonomy. Their history and continual progression can offer a very unique perspective, particularly for school leadership.

The purpose of this study was not to begin with specific patterns and relationships and then prove it (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As its name indicates, grounded theory works to construct a theory from the ground up. Although the rotation of leadership does exist in some educational models, it seems to duplicate the stressors of these formal educational models and, thus, limit sustainability. In grounded theory, the researcher goes into an area with a focal study guided by a problem in mind (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). What is relevant emerges (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). What emerged were the intricacies of specific Zapatista practices that can help in sustainable rotated leadership and the specifics of this rotating organizational structure. Grounded theory was an appropriate research design because it allowed the researcher to make theory-building contributions (Creswell, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016) to current leadership models in secondary school settings. Additionally, the conceptualizing implementation of a rotating model does not preconceive possible emergent problems (Glaser, 2014). Accordingly, participants problematize this structure while also offering possible proactive measures providing links between concepts and recommendations with clear methods of application (Glaser, 2014).

Grounded theory offers the tools to explore established concepts under a new light (Charmaz, 2011) which permits space to reexamine and piece together fixed organizational structures. Its aim of examining individual and collective actions as well as defining social processes (Charmaz, Thornberg, & Keane, 2018) fit within the purpose of this study's intent to use various groups of participants to help create a model of potential leadership structure. Furthermore, grounded theory is appropriate when

investigating leadership within unique contexts (Kempster & Parry, 2011). This study aimed not to correct, but to expand (Glaser, 2014) upon educational models.

As grounded theory is often debated and disputed (Walker & Myrick, 2006), qualitative researchers have used grounded theory in different ways (Charmaz, 2009; Creswell, 2014; Corbin, & Strauss 2008). The research design used in this study is grounded theory from a constructivist perspective. The focus then is on the "views, values, beliefs, feelings, assumptions, and ideologies of the individuals" (Creswell, 2014). The constructivist design studies the individuals and their feelings throughout a specified process (Creswell, 2014). More specifically, a constructivist perspective of grounded theory renounces objectivity (Charmaz et al., 2018), for these perceptions can shape what is seen and interpreted (Charmaz, 2011). A constructivist focus also allows for nontraditional tactics by using previous grounded theory strategies as "flexible guidelines" (Charmaz et al., 2018) while also revealing the researcher's views and actions (Charmaz, 2011).

Additionally, a constructivist approach focuses primarily on the theory developed, not discovered, from the researcher's firsthand experiences in the field along with the researcher's opportunity to conceptualize what is taking place in the research setting and context (Charmaz, 2009; Creswell, 2014). Fram (2013) notes how Charmaz's constructivist approach allows for researcher and participant "mutual construction of knowledge" (p. 2) of the research and participants. Charmaz et al. (2018) explain that a "constructivist version of grounded theory assumes that people construct both the studied phenomenon and the research process through their actions" (p. 412). The phenomena of interest for me, as stated in previous chapters, is the practice and conceptualization of

rotated leadership. This study investigated how implementing a rotating element and Zapatista practices to already existing leadership models can help address the needs of entire schools, administrators, teachers, and thus, ultimately, better service students.

When one is certain, contradictory evidence can be easily overlooked (Ravitch, 2010). Embracing this notion, traditional grounded theory dissuades researchers from conducting literature reviews beforehand to minimize influence (Charmaz et al., 2018). However, constructivist and informed grounded theory is grounded by the data and informed by the literature (Thornberg, 2012). This literature awareness does not encourage the loss of doubt, for "it is doubt that shows we are still thinking, still willing to reexamine harden beliefs when confronted with new facts and new evidence" (Ravitch, 2012, p. 2). Instead, one is to maintain openness and critique, enhancing sensitivity to data and emerging concepts (Charmaz et al., 2018; Thornberg, 2012). Treating the surveyed literature not as sacred truths can generate a fluid conversation between the researcher, literature, and data (Thornberg, 2012). With informed constructivist grounded theory, one can not only recognize and refer to pre-existing literature creating connections for theory construction but also "the researcher might extend and elaborate as well as challenge and revise pre-existing concepts and theories" (Thornberg, 2012, p. 254).

Social Justice Research

This research was fueled by personal observational discoveries of an unjust management system that fault not only administrators, but, ultimately, the students the administrators serve; therefore, a social justice lens is appropriate and necessary. Social justice research not only addresses "differential power, prestige, resources, and suffering

among peoples and individuals" (Charmaz, 2011, p. 359) but also takes a stance on oppressive social structures that shape life (Charmaz et al., 2018). Social justice research considers these subtleties and entangled webs of power and oppression (Charmaz et al., 2018). Charmaz labels constructivist grounded theory as notably suitable for studies rooted in social justice as critical qualitative inquiry "begins with conceptions of justice and injustice" (Charmaz, 2017, p. 35). However, as the dominant views of social justice, are predicated on the heinous acts and causalities of imperialism (Grande, 2000), one must remain in constant reflection and awareness verifying true social justice research as a mechanism to address and progress, as a people.

Indigenous Methodologies

If oppression constitutes "social inequity that is woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness" (Bell, 2016, p. 4), then it is quite plausible that many adopted research approaches are woven with oppressive threads. At its origin, qualitative research was viewed as a method to understand the exotic other through a colonial microscope (Allen, 2011). Charmaz (2017) argues that Anglo-North American worldviews still run rampant within qualitative research and interpretations. Although social justice research is a step towards negating these foundations, decolonizing research can begin with assessing the Western gaze. This entails constantly considering how discriminatory institutions further marginalize and dehumanize. In addition, one must step disconnect from the notion that only one perspective can grasp the singular truth and assume a totalizing view of the world (Calderon, 2014).

As a substantial part of this study included the Zapatista Indigenous community, I worked to remain cautious, humble, and accurate in each moment of collection, analysis, and representation. In addition because I am not Zapatista nor have anyone in my immediate family who is connected with the Zapatistas, I scrutinized my impetus for focusing on the Zapatistas, verifying no notions of romanticism or the contrary. This examination did not overlook the challenges the Zapatistas have faced, nor replicate their leadership. Nonetheless, as much research on indigenous communities "has historically been damage centered" (Tuck, 2009, p. 412), I wanted to highlight strengths in Zapatista leadership principles and practices. I additionally am telling stories rooted in survival, the survival not only of the Zapatistas, but also of their teachings throughout the United States. I look to their teachings and how they are positively perpetuated in the lives of the participants.

For some, the very act of looking to the Zapatistas as a guide for sustainable leadership can be identified as dangerous, similar to American Indian critical studies (Grande, 2000). Initially, there were some who did allude to such cautionary rhetoric; however, this further fueled my determination to represent those with bandana covered faces honestly and respectfully. When beginning this dissertation, I carried a strong conviction that Zapatista practices could help heal our educational spaces and in particular school leaders.

We are all conditioned (Freire, 1998) and in my effort to live beyond my socialization I looked to Kovach's (2018) suggestions on how to guide this work away from opportunistic and taxing histories by respecting Indigenous knowledge, including listening to multiple Indigenous voices, co-authoring, and sharing research. Throughout

this study, I primarily focused on respecting Indigenous knowledge by familiarizing myself with literature providing historical contexts, using and understanding appropriate terms, and integrating Zapatista principles in my interview process. The people I interviewed are not practicing Zapatistas from Chiapas, Mexico. Instead, I included participants with positive relations with Zapatista members and experiences with Zapatista gatherings in Chiapas.

Chicana Feminist Epistemology

Chicana feminist epistemology is not defined within a male-centered perspective, but instead allows for all the interscetionality of my ever so fluid identity (Calderon, Delgado Bernal, Perez, Huber, Malagon, & Velez, 2012). Delgado Bernal (1998) maintains that a Chicana feminist epistemology is "grounded in the rich legacy of Chicanas' resistance and translates into a pursuit of social justice in both research and scholarship" (p. 562). She goes on to discuss cultural intuition, which is a unique perspective for those who identify as such. Cultural intuition is constructed through personal experience, professional experience, existing literature, and the analytical research process.

My Chicana feminist epistemology names and seizes credence for my identity and experiences. This approach understands and values my objectivity and identifies it as instrumental to my research. My role, then, is not only to observe, but also to have and express my input (Freire, 1998). A Chicana feminist lens allows me to easily access tools to disrupt binaries in the classroom (Calderon, et al., 2012), and I would argue within an entire school.

Staying consistent with these ideals, each previous chapter begins with an anecdote further coloring who I am, grounding this dissertation in honest reflection and expression, exposing my truths, and further dissecting my convictions. My intentions throughout this process were to consider how these very distinct worlds could somehow exist, adjusting for the context found in American educational settings.

Overall Approach

The study was conducted in two phases. The first phase of the research focused on gathering data from participants who are familiar with Zapatista practices because of their involvement in Zapatista *encuentros*. This phase also included collecting data from participants who are presently or have previously worked in higher institutions of education already utilizing a rotating element in their leadership model. The information collected in phase one was analyzed and guided the information gathered in phase two.

The second phase of the study collected data from participants in current high schools or continuation schools without a rotating element in their leadership model. During this phase of study, the researcher presented elements of Zapatista principles and practices and discussed how these could and if they should be applied to a school leadership. Then, the participants additionally conceptualized a rotating leadership model with Zapatista practices. Each participant created a model, and then I constructed a model incorporating common themes and practices.

Setting

The setting of this study was in an urban region of California. Most of the participants lived within that large urban region. However, three of the participants found it most convenient to participate in an online interview due to distance between the

interviewer and interviewee. I encouraged the participants to select the location of the interview for maximum comfort and accessibility. Only two interviews were conducted in locations I selected within the region. Of the 24 interviews, five were conducted in the interviewee's professional work office outside of their duty hours.

Twenty-two of the participants have experienced being in the classroom as an educator. Eighteen of the participants presently worked within education. Eight worked in secondary schools, three in continuation schools, and seven worked in higher education institutions. Of those who worked in secondary and continuation schools, six worked within various district schools, three worked in independent charter schools, and two worked in pilot schools. All of the schools remained within the county line, but encompassed several different districts. In an effort to maintain anonymity, additional characteristics regarding the educators' place of employment, in particular, will be described in general terms.

Participants

This study was divided into two phases of data collection with four types of participants. The first group of participants included people who were familiar with Zapatista practices because of their involvement in Zapatista *encuentros*. This phase also included participants who are presently or have previously worked in higher institutions of education as administrators already utilizing a rotating element in their leadership model. The second phase included administrators presently working to some degree as an administrator and teachers who had obtained their administrative credential within the past five years, but were not working in an administrative position. Although each of these participants may seem vastly different, they are interconnected in their struggle for

freedom (Freire, 1992; Freire, 1998; Freire, 1970/2009). In Mexico, the Zapatistas' struggle is both abstract and concrete, fighting for their way of life and very existence. All of the participants for this study live primarily in the United States and engage typically with internal battles for freedom and against oppression, whether for themselves or their students.

The first group of participants consisted of ten people familiar with the Zapatista leadership. These particular persons were selected because they were privy to rare knowledge about Zapatista non-oppressive organizational structure and leadership practices that appear to be successful and self-sustaining. Each of the participants had first-hand experience with at least one Zapatista *encuentro*. Delegations to the Zapatista communities seemed to have started soon after the initial uprising. Delegates cooperated in observations, conversations, and community practices. *Encuentros* are more reminiscent of conferences with focused topics and workshops. However, the participants' experiences ranged from one *encuentro* to years of participating in and even being organizers of *encuentros*. Several participants additionally lived with the Zapatistas over a span of several months. Some of these individuals additionally had studied the Zapatistas for their own scholarly research purposes. Additionally, these participants all had some understanding of our current American school system as students, educators, or both. Of the ten participants, six were educators either within higher education or secondary school settings. These perspectives assisted in identifying how such a structure and style could be translated and eventually transferred into current high schools.

This first phase of interviews also included two current university department chairs and one recent department chair. These participants were initially included because

the structure of university academic departments includes faculty rotating in and out of department leadership roles. These participants were important contributors because they were able to speak to how rotating leadership worked in an academic setting, described the nature of their jobs when they were in a leadership role, and discussed both the positive elements and areas for improvement within the academic structure. Both groups helped in identifying key components, practices, challenges and benefits of rotated leadership.

Throughout this study, I propose that administrators act as oppressors to their employees and are also oppressed systemically through their positions of authority. This duel identity of oppressor and oppressed provided an interesting opportunity for study and provocation. In grounded theory, relevancy and understandability are key, especially for the people at work in the field of study on which the emergent theory is grounded (Glaser, 2014). As the impetus for change most often comes from marginalized groups (Bell, 2016), administrators possess some power, and can be "enlisted in the struggle to free themselves" (Freire, 1970/2009 p. 49). My study works to imagine possible improvements for educational leadership; it was vital for educational leaders to participate in creating alternatives and solutions.

Twelve participants in the second phase of interviews included various administrators and people familiar with the demands of the administrator position by earning an administrative credential. Eight administrators interviewed were already in a principle or an assistant principal position. Four of the interviewees acquired their administrative credential within the past five years. Three of these participants hesitated to leap into a full time administrative position, but were already fulfilling some

administrative duties. One participant had begun the transition into an administrative position and decided to return to the classroom. These positions were selected because a rotating element in leadership would directly affect administrators and their current positions. They are in the best position to conceptualize how a rotating element and Zapatista practices could be implemented, further identifying possible pros and cons.

The participants were selected through purposeful sampling in that the participants will be selected intentionally because of their relevant background to better understand the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014) of a current administrator for this study. Many of the participants were identified through a convenience and snowball sampling. Background information for each participant is included at the beginning of the findings chapters.

Table 1

Biographical Overview of Zapatista Delegation and Encuentro Participants

Names	Ethnicity	Gender Identity	Educator Experience	Current Career Field
ESEN	Chicana	Female	K-12 Teacher	Art
LUNA	Latina	Female	Professor	Medical
DIEGO	Chicano	Male	Professor	Education
CITLALI	Mestiza	Female	Professor	Education
ALMA	Mexican American	Female	K-8 Teacher	Non-Profit
MIGUEL	Chicano	Male	Professor	Education
SANTA	Xicanx	Female	Non-Profit	Government
SARA	Central American	Female	Professor	Education
ASHOKA	Tamil Ski Lankan	Male	None	Film
LUZ	Colombian, Irish American	Female	Non-Profit	Film

Table 2

Biographical Overview of Administrator Participants

Name	Ethnicity	Gender Identity	Type of School	Work Experience in Education
Amada	Latina	Female	Charter school	7 years
Val	Chicana	Female	Pilot school	10 years
Phillip	Caucasian	Male	District school	20 years
Kay	Filipino	Female	Charter school	8 years
Don	Indigenous	Male	District school	10 years
Rene	Hispanic	Male	District school	20 years
Cruz	Mexican	Male	Charter school	9 years
Sage	Colombian-American	Male	District school	13 years
Mel	European American	Female	District school	20 years
Sasha	Salvadoran-American	Female	Pilot school	10 years
Arnel	Chicano	Male	Charter school	10 years
Julian	Asian	Male	Public university	20 years
Brisa	Italian-Mexican	Female	Public university	20 years
David	African American	Male	Public university	20 years

Data Collection Procedures

In this grounded theory study, my data sources included 24 interviews with four different groups of participants. The data collected were iterative and extensive for many perspectives were required to generate a substantive theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) on how Zapatista practices can assist in developing and sustaining rotated leadership for secondary schooling. This supported a process by which data was reduced logically and repetitively identified as constant comparative analysis (CCA). As Glaser and Strauss (1967) note "the constant comparative method of joint coding and analysis is to generate theory more systematically" (p. 102). More specifically, this study referred to one of Boeije's (2002) approaches to CCA by the comparison of interviews of different groups, for four sets of participants were interviewed to piece together how rotating leadership with Zapatista practices could, in fact, sustainably exist in a secondary setting.

Interviews

Generally, in most grounded theory studies, interviews and observations comprise the data (Creswell, 2012). However, for the purposes of this study, interviews were the primary method of data collection. Each group of participants underwent one semi-structured interview to provide context for the study while also leaving room for participants to freely discuss possible relevant ideas I may have overlooked in my interview protocol. The study design had two phases; they were not planned to occur concurrently. The first round of interviews informed the second and, therefore, occurred sequentially.

Fifteen of the participants were my acquaintances for some years. The remaining nine were introduced to me through these acquaintances or other personal relationships.

These community connections helped in establishing trust between me and the participants (Kovach, 2018), trust that I would represent their information anonymously, accurately, and respectfully and trust that the interview was itself a safe space. This is an additional practice within Chicana Feminist Epistemology as researchers are expected to build *confianza* with their participants (Calderon et al., 2012). Grounded theory aims to generate credible descriptions to discern applicable actions (Kempster & Parry, 2011). This trust was especially important because many participants expressed critiques on current practice of leadership in their professional environments. They were also encouraged to imagine what education could look like and, the participants therein created models that made sense to them.

The primary focus of these interviews was to identify how Zapatista practices could assist in creating a sustainable rotating leadership model, and each group of participants assisted in that conceptualization. The Zapatista *encuentro* participants helped in better understanding the Zapatista model and identifying key transferrable elements. The department chairs also helped in identifying transferrable elements and exposed how rotating leadership could prove unsustainable without embedding Zapatista practices. The administrators took these various elements and envisioned new structures and practices, using examples they had witnessed or imagined.

The interviews lasted approximately one hour to two hours; most were conducted in a face-to-face and one-on-one manner. All of the interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Of the first phase of thirteen interviews, I transcribed eight, and five were sent out to a professional transcribing agency. In the second phase of eleven interviews, all but one interview was sent out to a transcribing agency. Altogether, I transcribed nine

interviews because of interview interruptions, sensitive material, and to better familiarize myself with the data.

Data Analysis Procedures

All findings were in direct result of interviews with the participants. These interviews allowed for initial themes to organically emerge from the data. When making comparisons, I drew on my own "personal knowledge, professional knowledge, and technical literature" to further break through assumptions and uncover specific dimensions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 84). The goal throughout the data analysis process was to never take anything for granted in order to maximize transparency and possibility (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

The process of transcription also allowed me to become extremely familiar with the interviews and the possible emergent themes. Preliminary conceptual categories and concepts were generated during the transcription process and ongoing review of data collected (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This proved extremely helpful for the sequential element of my study. As I transcribed most of the interviews in the first phase of interviews, I was able to become very familiar with the data to better construct questions and topics for the second phase of interviews.

For a grounded theorist, coding begins from the moment the first piece of data is collected (Charmaz et al., 2018). "Coding represents the operations by which data are broken down, conceptualized, and put back together in new ways" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 57). The extensive coding required of grounded theory was be appropriate in order to best discover emerging themes and in an effort to let the data guide the research findings (Creswell, 2014). There were three types of coding, particular to grounded

theory, that were used during the data analysis process: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The coding process involved forming initial categories of information about the phenomenon of transferrable Zapatista practices for sustaining rotating leadership. In using all of these processes, the researcher used the computer data management system named Dedoose.

The first step was the conceptualizing of the data, constantly reflecting and questioning (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). When there were sufficient data ready for analysis, open coding ensued. Initially, open coding was used because it required the researcher to maintain a broader perspective by breaking down the data, allowing for categories to emerge (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During open coding, each transcript was analyzed in sentences or groups of sentences reflecting one idea. Open coding also allowed for the concepts to emerge from the raw data and "later grouped into conceptual categories" (Khandkar, n.d.). I conducted line-by-line open coding which involves a close examination, sometimes looking at single words (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I segmented the information from the open coding.

Thereafter, I moved to axial coding where I explored and dissected the codes in relation to each other. Axial coding involves "a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 96). In other words, axial coding puts fractured data together in new and different ways (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Next, selective coding took place which involved "selecting the core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 116). Selective coding is

similar to axial coding, but the analysis is conducted at a higher and more abstract level (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Constructivist grounded theory relies heavily on reflection (Charmaz, 2017). This process assisted in comparing and contrasting theories and concepts (Thornberg, 2012). I used memo writing throughout surveying the literature, interviewing, and coding. This helped with documenting, organizing, and questioning data and ideas (Charmaz et al., 2018). My memos consisted of category lists, diagrams, explications, notes, questions, quotes etc., all in an effort to conceptualize this leadership model. It encouraged me to ask questions at each level of analysis, keeping me actively engaged with the data and strengthening the final conceptual model (Charmaz, 2011). Memo writing provided an opportunity for constant reflection and analysis (Thornberg, 2012).

It is important to note that, although I had planned to follow the process of coding in the order mentioned, coding in grounded theory is not separated into strict stages (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). It is not a linear process (Charmaz, 2018). Grounded theory merely highlights what many do naturally, "comparing incidents on our lives to see patterns in everyday life" (Glaser, 2014). Therefore, coding sessions encouraged jumping from one method of coding to the other (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2011). Coding involves the constant "interplay between proposing and checking (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 111). It was an interweaving of data collection and analysis that increased my ability to be detail oriented, focusing on "concepts, their meanings, and relationships (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 43). I then reorganized the data into a matrix to again revisit the material focusing on possibly missed themes or quotes. I strived to verify that no category was forced, as it would be a clear disservice to the research and findings

(Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Afterwards, all data was reduced to those most encompassing and relevant themes (Creswell, 2014).

Grounded theory also involves the researcher as a participant in the conceptualizing process (Walker & Myrick, 2006). The participants and the researcher work to co-construct (Charmaz, 2009). Throughout the data collection process, the iterative data analysis process of grounded theory originated both problems and solutions, allowing me to conceptualize a rotating leadership model implementing Zapatista practices.

Validity and Reliability/Credibility and Trustworthiness

A study's validity and reliability/credibility and trustworthiness are at its core. Validity and reliability are at times interconnected in establishing a sound study (Creswell, 2014). As validity encompasses the "development of sound evidence to demonstrate that the intended test interpretation matches the proposed purpose of the test" (Creswell, 2012, p. 630), the validity of a grounded theory study is continuous in its constant comparative analysis. Through open coding, in particular, data are triangulated constantly "between the information and the emerging categories" (Creswell, 2012, p. 442). This process is also repeated in axial coding. Reliability refers to the stability and consistency of the data collected (Creswell, 2012). Each interview assisted in improving the next interview and verifying clarity of the questions.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodology for conducting a constructivist informed grounded theory study through Chicana feminist epistemology. The purpose of using grounded theory for this study was to conceptualize how the rotation of leadership with

particular Zapatista practices can create a sustainable and efficient leadership structure for secondary schools. I am aware that this research will not overhaul our current American educational system, but instead my hope is that this research can inform present administrators to take steps toward more human focused and sustainable leadership practices.

CHAPTER 5

Findings: *Lento pero Advanzo*

The following two chapters are focused on the participants and findings of this study. This chapter captures the experiences and understandings of Zapatista delegation and *encuentro* participants. These participants supplied information that determined transferrable Zapatista general practices for the foundation of leadership that can be further developed for secondary schools. The subsequent chapter presents findings from administrators at both higher educational institutions and secondary schools. Together, they present complementary analyses to answer the research questions and recommend a rotating leadership practice that incorporates Zapatista practices for sustainability and efficiency.

The Zapatista Delegation and *Encuentro* Participants

This chapter represents a journey through time, memories, and feelings. It begins with short profiles of each Zapatista delegation and *encuentro* participant and then goes on to identify themes that emerged from the data, specifically: *Servir y no Servirse, Mandar Obedeciendo,* and *Caminando Preguntamos*. All participants visited Zapatista communities and presently live in the United States. Their perceptions are particularly relevant and unique because they have navigated through these two contradictory worlds overlapping them to the best of their abilities based on the confines of the system. These participants helped to provide a better understanding of how certain practices can be transferrable into secondary schools.

Esen - Passion

Esen is a Huichol Chicana who identifies as new mother, an educator, a runner, and "more than anything, as a community member." Esen's first introduction to the Zapatistas was in 1997 through an educational segment during a student organization meeting. Soon after, she was part of a delegation to Chiapas where she participated in dialogues and exchanges with Zapatista communities. She was inspired and engaged by Zapatista practices so much that she "literally left everything." Esen subleased her apartment, took her savings, and moved to Chiapas. She worked with the Zapatistas as a coordinator organizing delegations and participating in many community events and contributing in different capacities. Much of Zapatismo is part of Esen's personal philosophy. It lives in her essence, painting her perceptions and actions as she navigates through a world working to further suppress and dehumanize.

Luna – Non-Conformity

Examining one's identity can be an evolving and delicate process. With each embraced facets of her identity, Luna understands she carries the decisions of those before her and is constantly judged on how she identifies. As such, Luna currently identifies as a Latina, but did so with hesitancy and admitted that: "It is still a grey area for me." She first learned of the Zapatistas in an ethnographic anthropology class through readings and class discussions. When a call was sent throughout the southwest United States for a delegation, Luna was immediately interested. She participated in a delegation and was deeply impacted by her experience. Upon her return to the United States, she worked with a collective that continued to send delegations to Chiapas. She has

incorporated Zapatista practices as an educator, organizer, and as she obtains her medical degree.

Diego - Change

Diego self-identifies as a Chicano and father, as a community scholar, and a movement builder. These descriptors, for him, work to challenge the perceptions and realities certain titles can hold. No matter how he self-identifies, he recognizes others may see him differently and treat him according to their own socializations. Diego observes that identity is context specific, and so it can manifest itself in the privileges he benefits from or the lack thereof. His participation in Zapatista delegations was an extension of his own organizing work and, in one way, functioned as validation for contemplations, conversations, and actions he was already involved with here in the United States. These same principles are embedded into his classes with his students through content and practice. For Diego, going to Chiapas was not a beginning, but a part of a continuing journey of being an agent of change through his community work.

Citlali - Growth

"I am a Mestiza from Mexico City." Growing up, Citlali's struggle with her identity, individually and collectively, was very much linked to the plight of Mexico in the shadow of an oppressive United States. As a teacher, her mother's dogma was that education was the way out of poverty, the way to upward mobility. However, that idea proved inaccurate, a mantra fed to a desperate people by the autocratic heads of state. On January 1st, 1994, Citlali was in the state of Chiapas during the uprising. In the months that followed, she learned about the Zapatistas, deepening her understanding of what their struggle was about, and thus beginning her long process of learning, living, and reflecting

on the movement. She realized very early on that, “the struggle was not just for them…but for all of us.” She lived and worked in Chiapas for a time and carries Zapatismo with her as “an integral part of what she does…it’s always there.”

Alma - Empathy

To Alma, identifying as an American erases her parents’ identity and struggle. She also feels the Mexican-American identity does not encompass the political struggle and those struggles that she still battles. Alma is a first generation bicultural Chicana. She first learned about the Zapatistas through a friend in graduate school in Wisconsin. Although intrigued, she did not feel ready to visit Chiapas until the second opportunity to participate in a delegation presented itself. Alma worked as an elementary school teacher and a therapist for sexual assault and domestic violence; she was gravely burdened by the injustices created within this oppressive system. They were too much. She altered her path but stayed true to her ideologies and motivations to help by working in a cultural space and helping community members “create something out of their struggle.”

Miguel - Community

Miguel has been involved in social movements for a long time. He is a father, grandfather, professor, community scholar, and life-long activist. Although he acknowledges that his doctorate and lecturer position grant him certain privileges and an elitist status, he wholeheartedly fights against the views of exclusivity and superiority. Miguel spent his life searching for something better in regards to a governing system. In 1994, he was captivated by the images of the Zapatista uprising as shown through various media outlets. As he did not have the financial means to travel to Chiapas, he went to a local community art space and was able to sell donated art to fund his trip. He left his

wife and children and went as a peaceful observer. Since then, he has traveled numerous times to Zapatista communities. Though he lives in the United States with all the trappings of this system, he aims to live a dual existence, “trying to live a true life, be a true person.”

Santa - Reflection

Santa is a Xicanx heterosexual woman who identifies as an urban Zapatista. She feels she lives a double life in that she has a government day job and works in a Zapatista inspired autonomous space during most of her free time. She was 12 years old when she remembers being introduced to the Zapatistas through her father, Miguel. She remembers getting ready for school and watching her dad glued to the television. She was shocked, scared, and hopeful, hopeful “for humanity’s sake.” Santa observed and was inspired by her father’s involvement. She additionally went to Chiapas and spent some time with a Zapatista family. However, much of her work has been on this side of the border struggling to create a space fueled by Zapatista practices within the limitations of capitalistic structures.

Sara - Humanity

As a Central American, Sara stayed informed about the atrocities occurring in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala as an undergraduate student. Sara believes it is within “the contexts of Central American and indigenous resistance and revolutions,” that Zapatismo is set. Her community organizing work and art placed her in circles with people who were heavily involved with the Zapatistas and influenced her teaching practice. So much of who Sara is as an educator and artist is based on her belief that knowledge should be shared. “That’s part of our responsibility as human beings, is to not

horde knowledge or keep it to ourselves." Her students, in many ways, propel her curiosity. She diligently translates Zapatista practices into her teaching and classroom, planting seeds of possibility with her students, even more so since her recent participation in the Zapatista hosted international women's *encuentro*.

Ashoka - Justice

There is no identifier that fully can encompass Ashoka's experiences of "being somebody who has lived in multiple places…from different cultures." However, for the purposes of research, Ashoka identifies as a cis-male of Tamil Sri Lankan decent who was raised in the United States and Britain. In 2002, he was living in Mexico, studying anthropology in Puebla. He first went to Chiapas after he had heard about paramilitary attacks all around the state and ended up participating in human rights work as an observer. That first hand experience motivated his work with an organization arranging delegations, exchanges, and dialogues with Zapatista communities which afforded him the opportunity to "learn from what they were doing and bring those intentions and identities back here." Zapatista principles have informed his community organizing and his current work as he continues to explore how to incorporate such principles in this oppressive system.

Luz - Resiliency

Luz identifies as a Colombian, Irish-American filmmaker and an activist working to increase awareness and eradicate violence against women and girls. Luz is a survivor. She recently went to the international women's *encuentro* without informing her parents. She was motivated to attend and did not want to be discouraged by the real recent worry that comes with traveling to another country. Her first introduction to the Zapatistas was

through her friend and through working with Zapatista inspired autonomous community spaces. When she was invited to go, she was eager for the opportunity. So many moments impacted her in the *encuentro.* Luz finds herself now in a situation where she is considering how she already implements some Zapatista practices in her life and work. Her recent travels to this *encuentro* invigorated her search for her own liberation in the U.S. through Zapatista practices.

Discussion on Zapatista Delegation and *Encuentro* Participant Profiles

Throughout the years, the Zapatistas have welcomed peoples with views adjacent to their own in efforts to learn through discourse and experience. The Zapatistas do not claim to know the answers to all the questions, but their journey to procure better understandings has attracted attention from a myriad of divergent communities. This Zapatista inspired public, in many ways, walk parallel to the Zapatistas, creating places and taking actions of change within their own communities. The Zapatista existence cannot and should not be cloned and replicated into our school systems. Instead, the Zapatistas encourage visitors to take what they have learned, go back to their own communities, and adapt the work needed there. The constant task of self-reflection is ingrained in their transparent practices and promotes fluidity within their power structure. a noteworthy characteristic for leaving possibility in specific leadership practices.

The previous section provided a brief introduction on ten individuals who participated in such gatherings. Most participants had very unique experiences in their travels to Zapatista communities in Chiapas. Their involvement spanned over twenty years, and some of their visits consisted of days while others stretched over years. No matter the length of time spent, each was changed and inspired. Most took what they

learned and applied it in some way to their lives. The struggle of merging Zapatista practices into their daily actions and decision in this country proved challenging for all participants. However, each found a useful way to integrate some aspect of Zapatismo into their actions, work, or perceptions. Although many are no longer heavily involved in community organizing, they each seem to carry certain Zapatista principles with them distinctively, ever present, and within reach.

Although each participant lived through distinct experiences with the Zapatistas, common themes emerged: *Servir y no Servirse, Mandar Obedeciendo,* and *Caminando Preguntamos*. These three themes presented in this chapter are ones that were not only discussed at length by each participant, but also ones that are transferrable to circumstances here in the United States, especially within our educational settings. Data from 24 interviews conceptualized these themes, which consecutively, provided answers to the research questions. Though slightly varied in sub-themes, these are repeated in the following chapter centralized on data from administrators. These data, together, created the Rotating Leadership Model which is further discussed in Chapter 7.

Theme One: Servir Y No Servirse – To Serve: Not Self-Serve

Servir y no Servirse is one of the seven Zapatista principles redefining leadership, as we know it. Although there are some similarities with servant leadership, *Servir y no Servirse*, practices alternative leadership without using the term leader. This principle is presented as encompassing theme that works to help to understand the concepts that emerged of this study. This section does not wish to redefine this principle, but instead use it as a root for the emerging theme. In many ways, the principle of *Servir y no Servirse* defines leaders in a very unique way by highlighting a practice that many do not

equate with a leadership, service. For the purposes of this study, this theme is centralized on the concept of alternative leadership structures and various form of community engagement. This redefinition of power structures was a constant theme with all the Zapatista delegation and *encuentro* participants. All of the participants had some experience with the power structures that the Zapatistas practice, and they all spoke of it in high regard. In addition, Luna and Citlali pinpointed that many of these practices are ones rooted in the long history of their indigenous traditions and customs. This knowledge was the starting point for the Zapatistas. It provided them with a strong framework from which they built a currently sustainable and efficient method of governing.

Alternative Leadership

Most institutions we are familiar with are top-down hierarchies. However, the Zapatistas experience governing in a very different way. Their leadership practices are more horizontal in nature as discussed in Chapter 2. One particular example of this can be found with the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* (JBG), which Ashoka translated as Good Governance. The JBG are but one of the levels where information is presented and dispersed. Ashoka went on to further explain the structure by commenting that the information collected from one gathering is then conveyed upward to representatives from other communities and so on, until a decision is made, a true democracy. Their community members generally select these representatives. Often times, community members rotate this position. As each community possess some autonomy, flexibility in certain practices adds to the intricacies of rotation in the JBG. The JBG also embody governing assemblies where its members of "communal and municipal councils

convened to impart justices over those who had transgressed local norms" (Barmeyer, 2009, p. 62). These positions are rotated between all able members of the community. According to Miguel, there are eight members in each set of three. These sets rotate in and out of the councils for a year and then are replaced. Luna mentioned these rotations typically happen in two-week intervals, which is consisted with most literature (Barmeyer, 2009). Esen described that the transition process between the community members leaving and the ones entering involves a synopsis of what occurred, what is upcoming, and any unfinished business.

Zapatismo and School Leadership

The Zapatista practices of rotation can assist in the functionality of the leadership. Particularly in schools with hierarchies, Esen determined that leadership can become stagnant. Administrators can essentially "[drag] the place down." Rotation could aid with sustainability and negate stagnancy. Rotation in leaders at a high school level may provide a redefining of roles and duties on campuses. Esen asserted that implementing rotation among school leadership could empower school leaders in a different capacity. Luz anticipated that rotation could also result in a situation where all the weight of leadership is not placed on one person, but is instead cyclical.

Another common alternative leadership practice referenced or alluded to was distributed leadership. Many participants discussed the possibility of creating a scenario where schools had more than one principal. Luna, Alma, and Sara all suggested having several participate in the leadership practices at a school. Citlali and Diego both participated in distributed leadership first hand. In their experience, they noted that it is still a form of hierarchy, but a top heavy version. Both agreed that the burden is not so

heavy on one person, but some may still exhibit pleasure over exercising and proving power and control over others. On this topic, Citlali was more interested in the exploration not only of rotation, but also of a rotation as an element of some sort of distributed leadership effort.

Whether rotating or distributed leadership, both offer an alternative to typical hierarchies that are top down. Hierarchies do not only minimize community input, they also can dehumanize the leaders placed in positions of power. When discussing an instance where Miguel was in a leadership position, he remembered how he too felt conflicted. As he enforced rules on his subordinates, he felt burdened; he knew there were better and more democratic ways of leadership, despite his training in a top-down method. Additionally, Diego revealed his own frustrations as a previous executive director of an organization when discussing the innate inequalities and limitations within hierarchical positions. As Chapter 2 suggests, the burden of leadership was surely a consideration the Zapatistas had in mind when molding their leadership practices.

One distinct and crucial difference between Zapatista governing practices and any type of leadership enacted in the U.S. is the unmistakable ability to exercise autonomy. This ability did not come easily. In Chiapas, the Zapatistas have fought and continue to so that they can have self-governed freedom. This type of existence is far from how we live our daily lives and is out of reach for educational institutions. Sara remarked, “Their [Zapatista] structures step away from competitive tendencies encouraged by capitalistic governments.” Their autonomy, as Esen described, is not just autonomy of space, but one of mind and soul. To further unpack what the Zapatistas mean when they are talking about autonomy, Citlali extended the conversation by adding, “When they are talking

about the construct of autonomy, it's this: it's a kind of dignity and inter-relationship of living in dignity, with all things, with each other as a community and the world, and *la tierra* and *los montes*, and all beings in our relations, so your *cargo* is a part of that: it's a big part of that." Citlali referred to a responsibility and an awareness of one's place and connection to each other and the world, and in many ways, that intuition and guidance sets Zapatismo apart from many types of traditional leadership.

Although there are very obvious indicators that the Zapatistas labored to create a very inclusive participatory democracy, there are still ever looming contradictions of hierarchy. For as Citlali vocalized, hierarchies will always exist in some form or fashion. Miguel agreed that complete horizontality cannot exist. As educators working in a hierarchical structure, Sara and Citlali advocated for different and more horizontal practices, even if only within the massive and oppressive reality of the institutions they work for. Alternative leadership could also minimize corruption of school leaders as Luna communicated that the inspiration for implementing a more horizontal power structure is part of an effort to minimize corruption. Zapatista horizontal practices allow for community members to have an equal say and power in how they are governed. Luna also articulated how instrumental it can be for leaders to rotate and for those same leaders to "[hear] all the voices and perspectives" in their community, which allow for a profound awareness of how their decisions can impact their community, their community members, and themselves.

Community Engagement

All participants agreed, Zapatista communities are more horizontal in nature. Ashoka characterized it as a "bottom up" leadership where every community member,

"has a voice to speak up on issues…in order to get everybody's point heard." This is an effort to truly include community. Alma spoke to how the methods of verifying community members are heard can considerably vary in hierarchical systems. Community engagement is often discussed, but rarely actually practiced in American government and educational institutions. For the purposes of this study, community engagement encompasses the participation on site from students, staff, teachers, and administrators. Community engagement also refers to the contributions of parents and the communities surrounding the school. Zapatista practices secure and prioritize community engagement at many levels of their leadership and this section looks to how each group provides opportunities to invest and impart methods to best support school and student success.

The JBG also encompasses meetings where topics are introduced and thoroughly discussed. Many of the participants referenced that time was a non-factor in these meetings. All community members present spoke on the issue at hand or a topic important to them and were allowed to speak for as long as they deemed necessary. According to Luz, the Zapatistas "are not dismissive; they actually give a platform to everybody." Diego and Ashoka indicated that the process of rotation also further allows for community members to have a voice and take up the responsibility of leadership in all levels of the community.

Such community engagement may appear similar to some of the practices already present within many school districts. Ashoka indicated that true community engagement theoretically can happen in community boards, parent-teacher meetings, parent teacher associations, and school boards. Although "these are structures that exist for communities

being involved in education, they are just kind of bad. They are not run in a way to incorporate everyone's voice." He, however, embraced the hope that many of these systems can provide space and agency for actually implementing decisions and solutions. Citlali highlighted the difference in Zapatista community engagement by noting that "[it is] that every person, every member of the community, of the society gets to have a role in deciding their fate, and it's usually very intertwined." It grants roles for learning and creating. Incorporating true community engagement recognizes that everyone brings something to the table and values what is contributed. Luna proposed that it is, in fact, the community input that is at the root of the Zapatista sustainability.

Most of American K-12 public school institutions are managed by one leader, the principal. Luna maintained that such hierarchies do not allow for leaders to have everyone's interest at heart. Instead, decisions are commonly individualistically fueled. These inveterate leadership models are carried over to newer charter schools. The top-heavy hierarchy structures that many charter schools operate with typically do not allow for people to really voice their opinions. Alma recalled her own experiences in working in a charter school where teachers would irrepressibly cry out of frustration by the toxicity of their work environments. Such destructive practices were fueled by common firings of those who voiced contradictory views. In their educational institutions of higher learning, Sara and Citlali discussed how stepping outside of the perceived normal can also have detrimental effects. Sara recollected instances where her fellow faculty members refused to speak up over fear of possible retribution. In reference to educational institutions where she has worked and had opportunities to observe, Citlali went on to state "faculty and students are often the most powerless people in the whole thing." This

perception was common among the Zapatista delegation and *encuentro* participants. Unfortunately, most of those involved in some capacity in education revealed the silence they endure, silence typically veiled by fear.

Community engagement also allows for strong bonds to form. Regrettably, these bonds may be rare in high school settings. Although education is based on the purpose of cultivating student learning and maturity, American schools do not often systematically provide space for students to have voice. Interactions with and expectations of students involves true community engagement and can be exceedingly beneficial. Luz articulated instances where students are active and informed members of school boards, where students themselves are involved in class leadership. She conveyed that these changes could permit students "to really see the influence they have. It would get them to understand that they can make a different, that it's not hopeless, that our situation is not entirely desperate." Alma recommended creating spaces where students can express their true selves and also collaborate on what their education should be. Diego advanced the topic by adding that students should additionally contribute to not only what they are learning but how they are learning as well.

Often administrators, teachers, staff, parents, and students each function separately and even work against each other. Esen envisioned a situation where all stakeholders are invested in respectful, honest relationships and communications. In such a setting, she believed parents can be "more involved in the whole gamut" of high school education, learning to be advocates for their children and even possibly taking part in solutions. She went on to express the value of parent representatives on boards and committees, with the authority to express their real opinions and have actual valued input

in the decision-making process. Santa trusted Zapatista practices interwoven in an American school can "carve out an autonomous space" and involve parents in a real way, in a way that has never been done before. Santa and Esen agreed, witnessed practices contrary to the superficial involvement in many schools is essential, an arrangement where parents are heard and listened to. This involvement begins with perceptions. Esen challenged educators to cease from treating parents as subservient; rather they should be seen as equal and valuable partners in their child's education. This examination and new designation of the role of parents can be the beginning of a more symbiotic relationship between school and student relations.

To the Zapatistas, leadership and governing are coupled with community engagement. For Miguel, Zapatista leadership means to be selected by one's community to lead and represent their vision accurately and accountably. Luna communicated that it is leadership that comes from the people; it is community-based. All expressed their admiration for how the Zapatistas endeavored to not only include community engagement but also use that knowledge to be better leaders. These practices can be a guide to improve students and parents engagement in schools, so as to better incorporate their perspectives in school wide decisions.

Servir Y No Servirse Challenges

When asking participants about the challenges impeding Zapatista practices from existing in structures and systems in American high schools, the participants expressed numerous concerns. However, funding was a focal point. Although each participant did not precisely mention budgets and funding as a concrete obstacle, many described the difficulties of reaching true autonomy and independent sustainability, particularly in this

country. Furthermore, many of the challenges involved government funded public education and the many policies and regulations tethered to that funding, further limiting possible Zapatista-inspired changes.

When asked to describe what structural characteristics are needed to execute these alternative practices of leadership and community engagement, Miguel and Santa mentioned sustainability. Similarly, Ashoka identified underfunding and how such practices can severely impact any opportunity for creativity and experimentation. In discussing her own experiences, Citlali expressed how budgets and allocating limited resources could impact leadership even at a higher education institution. When considering how one could have Zapatista-inspired American high school leadership structures and systems, Citlali and Ashoka directly labeled funding as an immense barrier for applying many Zapatista practices in an American high school.

Funding in many ways is directly connected to lack of access to autonomy for many schools. Luz recognized this and indicated that autonomy, in this country, cannot happen without reworking her community's view of money and having money. She asked, "How can we reframe the way that we see money, and really understand that it's a tool that can give us access to land, and access to monitoring our own businesses in ways that are equitable?" In reference to autonomy, Ashoka linked funding and systems of control with creating financial dependency. He hypothesized that autonomy can be achieved through community funding or "based upon radical distribution of wealth." Luna struggled to even envision these practices in public schools. Esen and Val questioned the viability of ever implementing Zapatista practices in public schools. Esen instead considered the private sector as a possible alternative and Val proposed a pilot

school. Luz, additionally, suggested a "worker-owned" scenario. Although each conception may seem somewhat eccentric, the participants generally challenged themselves to consider an educational setting where Zapatista leadership structures and leadership could exist.

The culture of schools can also be a challenge that may obstruct Zapatista-inspired changes. Ashoka professed that schools are "one of the most authoritarian environments that young people are exposed to." He went on to distinguish one of the biggest challenges in truly transforming high schools is students, by then, have already been indoctrinated to the many unhealthy patterns enforced by American school systems. This indoctrination is something all struggle with not only in schools, but also in the socializing practices that are constantly bombarding. In this vein, Diego reflected on the purpose of institutions which is to essentially as institutionalizing ideas and practices. In distinguishing the distinctiveness of Zapatista methods of leading and living, Diego commented, "These particular institutions because of the way that they are derived and the way that they are led, they are different than traditional institutions in that they are flexible." However, flexibility can be difficult to achieve in highly structured settings. Citlali discussed how the adaptability in her own department in a higher education institution was created because they wanted to create more balanced and sustainable leadership and systems. She went on to mention that, as a department, they are always working through the contradictions that are practiced in their department with those existing in the structure of the larger bureaucracy. Many participants identified the significance of this fluidity not only in leadership, but also in the leadership structures.

The Zapatista model, like any other, will fail if it is merely copied and pasted into any American school. Much more must be done in order to adapt these practices to American high schools. This reiterated when considering the vast difference in the Zapatista model and many American educational institutions. Esen spoke to this by paraphrasing a common Zapatista message:

> We can't tell you how to be autonomous. We can't tell you what to do cause at the end of the day, we don't know your struggle. We don't know what it's like living in your environment; we don't know your reality. We don't know the circumstances of how things are, and we can't tell you where to go.

Esen used this statement as a guide and suggested a Zapatismo influence instead of a prototype. Citlali agreed and emphasized that looking to Zapatista practices is essential because this model "gives meaning and value to constructing autonomy outside of capitalism." All participants commented and critiqued capitalism, identifying its many detrimental effects on humanity, but also the hope of implementing Zapatista practices in American high schools.

Zapatista practices are immensely different from most institutions in how they are organized and how business is conducted. When implementing any changes to already existing organizations, challenges will unquestionably arise. These challenges can debilitate or strengthen, depending on how they are confronted. The Zapatistas have met many of their challenges head on and continuously work through honest reflection to overcome them by maintaining fluidity in their structures and systems. In the same way, the challenges presented here should not be seen as proof of impossibility, but instead means for negotiating and molding a system that can work for our realities.

Theme Two: Mandar Obedeciendo – Lead by Obeying

Mandar Obedeciendo is perhaps one of the most well known principles that guide Zapatista practices. The simple translation "lead by obeying" cannot adequately explain the convoluted definition of this principle. This section does not expect to further explicate what many scholars have already and continue to document and analyze. Instead, this section and theme, more than anything, is inspired by the ideas of *Mandar Obedeciendo.* In many ways, the principle of *Mandar Obedeciendo* defines leaders in a very unique way by highlighting a practice that many do not equate with an effective leader. The Zapatista delegation and *encuentro* participants all discussed various leadership qualities that Zapatista practices highlight. This theme encapsulates not only a redefinition of leadership, but also expectations and perceptions others have for leaders. For the purposes of this study, this second theme is centralized on the concept of leaders, who they are, and how they lead as presented through leadership traits.

Leadership Traits

The presumed traits and expectations of American leaders can often work to mold leaders who act in complete by opposite ways of what their communities need. Luna declared that traditional leaders are closely related to a "following the leader" transactional mentality. This atmosphere can create unhealthy and unsustainable leadership practices. Zapatista leadership, in many ways, is a living, breathing contradiction to these perceptions of leaders.

Humble. Citlali and Esen both discerned *Mandar Obedeciendo* as an opportunity for creative change in governing ourselves. However, its application to our schools can prove very challenging. Citlali stressed, "*Mandar Obedeciendo* does not speak of leaders.

There is no leadership in *Mandar Obedeciendo*. There is only service." This view of replacing leaders with those who serve the community is a basic yet significant difference in their view of leadership, for it fosters humility. Humility was a core trait all participants experienced in some form. To Luna, Zapatista leadership equated humility. Many Zapatista delegation and *encuentro* participants observed an honest humility that they had not previously witnessed first hand. This humility is one of the origins of the differences between traditional leadership and Zapatista leadership. Humility in Zapatista leaders allows for the basis of the following practices and redefinitions of leaders.

Listener. For the Zapatistas, listening is about listening to themselves and the needs of their communities, but it is also much more than listening to each other. It is listening to one's intuition. Citlali explained, the Zapatistas are well aware of their place in the world and know they do not exist in isolation. She went on to explain that Zapatista listening practices hold a deep connection to animals, environment, and the world. This intuition that Citlali described as listening, exchanging, learning, and adapting speaks to the prominence of listening in Zapatista practices.

The act of listening is rooted much more deeply within Zapatista practices. To Esen and Ashoka, Zapatista leadership is listening. Ashoka explained that their understanding of difference of opinion is ingrained in the belief that "other people's experience form who they are" as opposed to the judgment and categorization cast on others who remain "wrong for having different experiences than us." This act of listening is connected to the value that is placed on every community member and thus, every leader. In order to embark upon listening as a leader, one must value the people and the ideas presented by those individuals. Esen spoke to how genuine listening can be a rare

occurrence in many educational settings. The concept of valuing each other is simple, but difficult to practice. It is, nonetheless, vital in order for leaders to use Zapatista practices. Esen encouraged school leaders to take the time to value teacher input by taking teacher opinions and suggestions seriously. These ideas should not be limited to curricula but to all facets of how a school is run. Esen continued to suggest the same for staff members as well. This practice begins with valuing all members who work within a school, but also extends to students, parents, and community members. Luna spoke to how she has witnessed how many times students' knowledge or experiences are not valued. Their opinions seem to be even less respected, for they are rarely included in any decision-making process and are often ignored. These patterns must be altered to begin the process of valuing each other in American high schools.

Integrating the process of listening can be expressed through calculated contributions. For example, Luz suggested leaders should be viewed primarily as facilitators. Their role could be to encourage principles of counsel where speakers learn how partake in conversations, while also limiting participation so to not hinder the opportunity for others to express themselves. Luz continued, Zapatistas look to different ways of facilitating that allow for "more people to actually share their opinion." Creating these spaces requires pondering many questions and detecting our own biases and revitalizing spaces where leaders can listen to as many viewpoints as possible.

The practice of listening should not only be applied to leaders, but to the entire school culture. Luz frequently remarked that many are merely waiting for people to stop talking so they can share their own opinion. However, the school culture should work to teach students how to think critically, and to do so in ways where opinions shared are not

dismissed but as a part of a collective search for what is best. “Because at the end of the day, education should be about promoting critical thought, and…providing them with the tools and the confidence, and confidence means practice, giving them that opportunity to practice critical thought, to trusting their own voice.” These practices ring true not only for students, but also for the leaders who can model these actions.

Collective. Notions of collectivity are also very present in Zapatista leadership customs. Diego noted that all community members are “expected to be engaged and to be a leaders. Everybody has a role. It’s your vocation.” This comes with changing and rotating leadership. In doing so, one identifies as a, vital but singular, part of a larger collective. Ashoka expanded on this idea, by adding that the notion of representation acts as a type of oversight committee working as an informal checks and balances. The notion of the collective supports establishing codes of communication, accountability, and transparency, for as Esen remarked, it is all interconnected. Many of the participants referenced these particular characteristics and their value.

Accountability in school settings can regularly correspond to liability. However, with Zapatista practices, accountability pertains to the responsibility of acting on behalf of the collective. In emphasizing its value, Ashoka explained that, in instances when not accountable to the community, one is removed from leadership positions. This removing of position underlines the value Zapatista communities place on accountability. Esen contended that this accountability in leaders should also ripple down to students in regards to responsibility, a responsibility for their learning and their space. Accountability can also mean knowing more about our leaders, as Sara described. What we learn about our leaders is not only the superficial, but also engaging in positive

relationships. This knowledge aids in creating relationships and, thus, community. Being part of a community, a collective does not only mean having similarities. Sara affirmed that being part of a collective means working together for a shared vision, and, Diego added, with a shared accountability. The collective mindset also denies a place for isolation. Sara claimed this can grow roots and build solidarity. Sara adds that a constant in Zapatismo is working in solidarity to make the world a better place. This is at the forefront of their practices. To some degree, it a reinterpretation of oneself. Sara shared that once:

> You work together on so many things you see yourself not as I but more as a we. We haven't gotten that far with that part. We need to cultivate that. I love when we, in an indigenous practice, look at our elders and we look at our future children. We are all intertwined…we have to be strong. We have to be warriors.

This understanding of the collective self can be a concrete alternative to the individualistic perception of leaders and followers. The collective self can also motivate meaningful change for our schools.

Accepting. A character of empathy and compassion is rooted in the Zapatista method of governing. Sara asserted that Zapatista compassion begins with the collective appreciation of differing experiences. Luz characterized their leadership as focused on humanity, encouraging a deep acceptance of oneself and others. Luz also experienced and was taken aback by a lack of judgment in community events. She asserted that this awareness creates true opportunity for acquiring liberation from socializations that weigh us down, limiting our true potential. Esen considered how this practice can be transferred to schools through space, a place "for everyone, without judgment, where we wouldn't be

facing a lot of things that are imposed upon communities, and upon people, and that goes beyond capitalism."

Diego recognized this practice in how leaders are not shamed by the community for making mistakes. There was an insightful understanding that, "when they fumbled, it was just part of the learning process." Perfection was not expected. Alma noted the significance of these spaces. "I feel that places where you can actually be yourself and not be judged, it's so healing. It's so healing. I think the schools need a lot of that now seeing this whole discrimination." Sara also touched on how valuable space can be not only concretely, but the space to "empower yourself. Everyday is an opportunity. There are opportunities every moment. You have to be open to them." All work to design schools as vehicles for empowerment and not maintaining control.

Mandar Obedeciendo Challenges

Humility is a strength for Zapatista communities, but in many ways a challenge for American leaders. Esen identified the amount of work needed in order to truly embody humility as a leader. She disclosed that "it takes a lot of ego to be put away…and people aren't willing to do that." Alma and Esen agreed that ego in leadership is a tremendous and authentic challenge. Esen further observed this as the first challenge to implementing Zapatista leadership traits and practices. She described it as "People's unwillingness to let go…that they don't have to be the ones with all the answers, and to guide where they need to go all the time." Both Diego and Citlali acknowledged working in organizations where ego resulted in budgetary and power battles.

Honesty is so vital for creating community and can often be at odds with the limitations under which schools exist. Citlali agreed that honesty is very challenging in

school settings. This lack of honesty can be the result of human relations, privacy regulations, or numerous other reasons. Many, even with similar positions and titles, are not equally accountable to systematic liabilities. There can also be a secrecy that can come with leadership change. Regularly, replacing school leaders can be a sign of revitalization or even used as a punitive measure for negative occurrences within that school, a clear sign of weakness. These structural elements seem to critically impede the relations and community building between school leaders and school stakeholders.

Listening is another seemingly simple action which some Zapatista delegation and *encuentro* participants identified as a barrier to having Zapatista-inspired leaders. In describing her own encounters with school leadership, Esen noted how in her experience, "Admins don't listen." She expressed that the needs of the school are always in some way being advocated for, but rarely addressed. This notion of being ignored seems to be a common theme among several educators, administrators, and teachers alike.

Although it may seem inconceivable to have Zapatista-inspired leaders, many participants remained inspired by positive pockets of change they witnessed where persons took similar ideals and worked within the oppressive limitations of this capitalistic country to attain some space for liberation. Although this may seem overwhelming, one starting point is with the school leaders. Citlali recalled that in Zapatista practices, there circulates a certain pride when taking on leadership roles. These positions are not just seen as jobs or mundane responsibilities. Citlali added "it is a kind of acknowledgement and respect of the importance of the work." These opportunities, to partake in participatory democracy grants them with a type of "purpose and meaning." This insightful perception can be applied to school leaders, and although it may take time

to alter the perceptions of others, school leaders can make an effort to redefine their professions beginning by focusing on the importance of their work and finding how it can present them with purpose and meaning.

Theme Three: Caminando Preguntamos – As We Walk, We Ask Questions

Although not one of the seven Zapatista principles, *Caminando Preguntamos* has accompanied the Zapatista movement for many years. This notion is very much about critical reflection, always on the path of improvement. As previously noted, the Zapatistas do not claim to know all or have all the solutions to world problems. Instead, they recognize, according to Citlali, that they are too "just figuring this out as we go." *Caminando Preguntamos* is also about carrying the past, "based on our ancestral ways" walking toward the horizon. This particular notion connects the ideals of reflection and imagining what could be. This can especially prove beneficial when considering the reality of American high schools, for one can become quickly dismayed and overwhelmed by the reality. However, the practices of reflection and imagining are vital to explore the possibility of what school in this country could be like.

Reflection

The reflection practiced by the Zapatistas was a custom that most of the participants applied in their own lives because they relate to and value it. When attempting to define reflection, there may be some predispositions that are at odds with how the Zapatistas define reflection. Although reflection can be individual, it can also be collective. In Citlali's words:

> It's a collective process of critical analysis and reflection that is always going on and so there is always the 'How did we do this? Can we do it better? How can we

learn? How can we do it next time?' and that is happening all the time at all the levels.

This quote also exposes how, for the Zapatistas, reflection is an ongoing and never-ending process. Once one reflects, it does not stop there. Luna added, there is a constant unpacking and rethinking of practices. It maximizes adaptability because this reflection does not limit itself to the abstract, but travels to concrete action. This constant reflection creates an environment that changes, according to Luna, depending on the circumstances.

Reflection should not only be limited to school leadership and macro ideas. It also may take place at every level with everyone. Alma suggested reflections can begin with teachers and administrators when first beginning their career, reflecting on why they are entering the education field. It can continue ever school year, reflecting on the purpose for staying in education. Alma suggested this may help in separating those who may be fueled financially or lack qualification. Esen considered the school board and how the process of reflection could improve their policies and decisions. Esen went further by encouraging communities to reflect on the purpose of education, wondering if current community schools are serving those purposes.

The practices of reflection can show themselves in various areas in leadership actions in schools. This act of reflection could help in assessing school inclusivity. This inclusivity can translate into who gets to lead, encouraging a diversity of leadership, as Diego saw in Zapatista communities, maintaining a different type of respect for leadership. This community engagement allows the involvement of all types of community members. Ashoka reaffirmed, this inclusivity can allow for different people from different backgrounds to walk together and lead together. This inclusivity can reach

beyond the leadership and be incorporated into culturally responsive curricula and practices. Alma called for "curriculum that reflects the reality." Ashoka agreed when reflecting on the possibility of teaching honest interpretations of history and providing for cultural exchanges in the classroom. These reflections are a miniscule example of how reflective practices could impact schools.

Reflection is embedded in various Zapatista practices. One example is how many learn to lead by leading. None of the leaders receives extensive training on how to lead. Furthermore, Diego articulated that learning by leading is about cultivating emergent leadership locally. This custom is consistent with traditional human learning. Citlali continued by noting that no one learns anything by reading or listening but instead referenced experiential learning. "You learn to do by doing it. I learned to teach by teaching." Diego reflected on how American systems of leadership are the complete opposite. Before taking a leadership position, one often has to prove leadership abilities. Although this practice may seem impractical in American high schools, Diego asserted that if schools used the Zapatista model the entire leadership practice would be different. Once a mistake is made, it would get fixed, and the school community would keep moving. To a certain extent, all leaders experience leading for the first time. Acknowledging this and supporting school leaders does not assume all accountability is lost. However, through the process of constant reflection, school leaders can continuously get better no matter their experience.

Frequently, reflection is used to identify opportunities for improvement; however, reflection can also be used to naming successes. Luz spoke to how celebrating the little triumphs can help navigate through the burnout that can come with activism. Citlali

acknowledged the Zapatista practice of celebrating and how it is a vital transferrable element to all aspects of life. She emphasized that joy can give us the energy for confronting the many perils associated with living everyday in oppressive structures. This practice can transcend to educators. Education can be grueling, frustrating, and draining. However, taking time to cherish accomplishments can aid in enduring the certain hardships that come with educating students in broken systems.

Imagining the Possible

Consistent with the practices of reflection comes imagination. All participants envisioned what Zapatista practices in high schools could look like. In certain respects, this was challenging. As Alma expressed, it was challenging because she had never seen it. She quickly added, "I think it is possible." This practice of imagining can be very powerful. Citlali pointed out, "The power of imagining, of creating our utopic school structures, that is important for us to do and to keep working towards." She professed, "That's what the Zapatistas did," they imagined a better world and worked towards it, and still do to this day. Imagining the possible speaks to imagining what many consider impossible and working toward that goal.

With the work of imagining, also comes redefining what we already accept as normal. Participants re-imagined the role of the teacher, classrooms, education expectations, and education in general. Each of these entities, in many ways, has been normalized and accepted as they are throughout our society. This automatic acceptance denies critical reflection and reimagining what could be. Diego identified how this practice of reimagining parallels how the Zapatistas redefined their roles for their schools

as something beyond the mere passage of information. This is essentially the exercise the participants were involved with.

The expectation of American education, Ashoka believed, is to teach people to accept authority, believe what they are told, and be good citizens. He instead offered an alternative, “creating a space where people are actually asking questions and questioning everything.” By attempting these practices, “we would be creating educational spaces where people are not being forced to conform but allowed to really find themselves…and perhaps step out into the world and really be encouraged. “ Ashoka envisioned education that prepares students to live fulfilled and informed lives.

When asked to imagine how education might implement Zapatista practices, Luz began to question the emphasis on behavior. She recognized schools prioritizing behavior often taking precedence even over academics. Ashoka allowed for the re-formulizations of ways students are disciplined. Similarly, Alma suggested true restorative practices in an effort to resolve and heal, as opposed to suspensions and expulsions that serve little purpose. Ashoka also visualized schools with more play, altering perceptions of schools as places for structured behavior and replacing it with places for imagining and creativity.

When considering the space of the classroom, Sara pushed for creative and beautiful, art filled space. She hoped for social justice art that inspires. She argued that such space can prompt a sense of dignity and respect. Sara went on to say that beautiful spaces translate as love and safety. Sara also challenged the acceptance of so much time in classrooms, and wonders what classes could look like in various locations, encouraging body movement, for example. Esen concurred by adding learning could be

more experiential where each stakeholder contributes to reframing what classrooms could look like and what experiences they can offer.

Participants continued in their practices of imagining by further rebelling against many cemented beliefs. Sara encouraged operating outside of a system that assumes all learners learn the same. Likewise, Luna visualized classrooms that are organized by skill not grade or age. Luna went on to envision practices that are more mindful of how students' talents and energies can be used. This corresponds to Sara's idea of challenging the curriculum and picturing the possibility of what homework could look like that was no boring or tedious. Moreover, Ashoka pictured schools where students have more say about their education and how they are being taught, encouraging students to actually experience excitement for going to school, where students and teachers actually, "engage with each other about what they are going to be learning." The practice of engaging students could provide justification for the lessons. Esen asserted that it encourages genuine connections between what is happening in the classroom and students' realities.

The process of reimagining also tackled typical teachers' viewpoints. However, teacher practices can be more challenging to adjust. Citlali discussed the possible challenges materializing when employing more democratic classrooms practices and how there can be push back from bureaucratic and student pressures. Nonetheless, Luna envisioned education where teachers are not the central figure. Similarly, Luz positioned the teacher not as the sole authority in classrooms but as one who provides questions. This classroom strategy can be in an effort to encourage students and teachers to be open to the process of discovery and the "nature of exploration." This re-imagination of

teachers moves away from classroom hierarchies and remains consistent with communal, more horizontal leadership.

Caminando Preguntamos Challenges

The challenges of making these dreams a reality are too many to list in this section. They do, however, include all of the challenges mentioned in previous sections with implementing Zapatista practices in American high schools. Notwithstanding this truth, many participants identified American culture as a real obstacle for bettering schools using Zapatista practices. Ashoka worked to articulate this notion by explaining, "American values are very individualistic and so with that in mind…there is a big clash between American values and autonomy and people collectively looking for themselves." Alma expressed that our socialization presents challenges for even imagining these spaces.

In terms of teacher reflection, Luna noted the challenge of asking teachers to add one more thing to their overwhelming repertoire. Rightly said, teachers are routinely overworked, as are school leaders. Adding the responsibility of honest and true reflection can prove unrealistic considering the limitations in a day, week, and semester. Nonetheless, Luna proposed that reflective practices can be beneficial, but also expressed that it could be hard to implement reflection if a system refuses to change. This cannot only be challenging, but in a sense demoralizing.

In regards to leaders, Sara reflected on the challenges in redefining leaders when certain expectations are consistent. Sara spoke to "that pressure to be productive and show productivity, and to show statistics and to show what the test scores are, really makes it super challenging." Sara also discussed the extreme competitive nature that

exists as a result of capitalism and how it is inserted in every part of our existence. She went on to contend that in American society in many ways our identity is closely related to our capital worth. We are that way "because that's what we encourage. You got to go to higher education and you're going to be able to earn more money." It is all connected to these capitalistic ideals that work to further oppress and dehumanize.

There are many challenges with implementing Zapatista practices in education. However as Citlali states, "nothing is without problems." And despite all of these challenges there remains the possibility of improvement in a system that so direly requires it. The exercises on imagining what could be leaves one wanting more almost lost in that dream state. The dreams are there and despite the challenges the possibility is worth striving for.

Conclusion

When discussing bringing together Zapatista practices at American high schools, many of the participants expressed doubt and sadness. The value of Zapatista principles and practices was unquestionable seen as generating positive change within schools and their communities if implemented. Lamentably, few believed that substantial changes were possible in our system. Many delegation and *encuentro* participants seemed to have given up on wishing for change within education. It was a clear necessity, but one thwarted by presently dismal oppressive systems, holding public education as its prisoner.

However, they did indicate that they could see small changes now and were hopeful that these could ripple eventually into a changed reality in our educational system. In discussing this, Luna designated that teachers can take individual and small

steps towards the ideal. Connecting it to her own life, Sara asserted, “I feel like my revolution is not going to be a giant one. It’s going to be in my home, in my classroom, with my friends.”

There is no time better than the present to consider and mold a different educational model. In describing the urgency for change, Citlali states:

> We have reached a moment where the situation is dire. We are tremendously at the brink of annihilation. I mean just to put it bluntly, so it is no surprise we are sick and depressed and killing each other at the most bleak moment of our humanity, so it is for me a matter of not of survival but thrival as well as we want to do more than just survive. We want to lead the lives as full as possible.

When considering the significance of this moment in our history, it can be overwhelming. However, may participants shared moments of change they have witnessed. These examples were not of immense extermination of oppressive structures, but instead smaller acts of change that still impacts and still progresses toward a different reality. A utopia educational model may not be currently accessible, but that should not negate reaching toward it and working toward change, for even in its smallest form, practices of positive action can alter moments, lives, and realities.

In this chapter, Zapatista delegation and *encuentro* participants shared their understanding and examples of Zapatista practices and principles. Each contributed an image to the Zapatista portrait. They disclosed various practices they felt could be applied to secondary schools and shared information regarding operational and structural systems that the Zapatistas exercised while they visited their communities. These practices and principles were merged to create three themes, *Servir y no Servirse, Mandar*

Obedeciendo, and *Caminando Preguntamos.* These themes are based on Zapatista principles but encompass more than one concept. These practices and principles became the basis for the information that was discussed with the administrator participants.

CHAPTER 6

Findings – *Construir y no Destruir*

The information provided in Chapter 5 was used as a basis for the possible practices focused on and thus the question construction during the interviews with the administrators. The Zapatista delegation and *encuentro* participants highlighted specific transferrable Zapatista practices for the foundation of leadership that may be further developed for secondary schools. These practices where presented to the administrators, and they were asked to imagine how these practices could translate into secondary schools. They were challenged to consider and visualize a utopic school, and they did. Thus, the heart of this chapter is based on imagination. The administrators at higher institutions and secondary schools developed examples where they have witnessed or heard about the implementation of certain practices, providing concrete examples. In addition, they were offered the opportunity to reach beyond what they knew and construct how certain practices could be implemented in a secondary school.

The following chapter is organized similarly to Chapter 5. This chapter first begins with short, but slightly more informative, portraits of each administrator participant. The next sections further explore the same three themes discussed with the Zapatista delegation and *encuentro* participants. The themes examined are *Servir y no Servirse, Mandar Obedeciendo,* and *Caminando Preguntamos.* These themes were consistent throughout all 24 interviews but are exhibited in different chapters because each group of participants adds distinct perspectives. Chapter 7 will continue the conversation by amalgamating all findings to construct a Rotating Leadership Model.

The Administrator Participants

We begin with profiles on each administrator. Administrators are labeled with a Zapatista related characteristic offering a glimpse into their leadership personality or leadership practice. The administrators provided information about how they identify culturally, personally, and academically. They also discussed their journey to acquiring their administrative credential or administrative position. These participants also shared the reasons for accepting or denying the administrative positions. All of the participants were from high schools and worked as administrators or as teachers in secondary schools. They all considered becoming an administrator and most were one at the time of the interview. All participants from higher education institutions have held teaching positions in either middle or high school. However, their work with pre-service teachers offered them the opportunity to observe and examine the inner workings of secondary schools.

Amada - Diplomacy

Amada has dwelled on the complexities of her self-identity for most of her life. She acknowledged her identity is ever changing within herself and also based on the interpretations of others. The juxtaposition of who she is and who she is expected to be based on her own visible expressions of self have left her in a state of indifferent acceptance. She revealed, “I find myself questioning when I’m doing something, if I am doing it because I think that’s what society wants me to do.” She carries this awareness and reflection with her, and it is demonstrated in her leadership. She added, “Who my identity is kind of androgynous in a way, where it’s female-male power and vulnerability.”

Amada mentioned that she wanted to become an administrator once she began her career path in education. She was an eighth grade English teacher for four years and has been an administrator for three years. Her career in education started while still in high school. She was a teacher's assistant for different levels and worked in an after school program tutoring students one-on-one. She loved the opportunity to tutor and the close relationships she was able to nurture with her students. However, she wanted to be part of something where she could influence bigger change.

Presently, Amada holds her administrative credential but has not yet cleared it. She works within an organization that has less than five schools. The school organization has a school board that presides over all the schools where large-scale decisions are made. Each school has a principal and assistant principals. The amount of assistant principals for each school depends on enrolled students. At the high school she is currently at, she is the only assistant principal. Throughout her career as an administrator, stress has been a prominent factor in her position concretely impacting her health. When first applying for an administrative position, she was told she would work primarily within curriculum and instruction. That has yet to be the case. Her responsibilities included testing along with overseeing the learning and discipline of all students and teachers. As she was generally satisfied with the organization she works for, she was looking for another administrative position in the same organization due to her considerable load. Amada cares for her students and keeps searching for a position where she can best serve the students without sacrificing her mental and physical wellbeing.

Val - Rebellion

Val identifies as a Chicana from the northern Mexican state of Sinaloa. Her gender identity is particularly significant to her as "it has been a struggle to being in some of these spaces" as a woman. Although not her subject preference, Val got her credential in science because she knew a Latina science teacher could be a beneficial motivator for her students. She is completing her eighth year teaching in a district school where she mostly taught tenth grade biology. The school Val works at participates in a type of distributed leadership. The school has one principal, but the assistant principal and teachers take on additional responsibilities to aid in the load of running the school.

Although seemingly practical, Val conveyed that no one at her school knows how to properly share leadership, and, in fact, in her school, "distributed leadership is up to the discretion of whoever is in leadership." She noted that her understanding of sharing leadership was based on a more progressive perception and proved to be inconsistent with the perceptions of her school leadership. Structurally, her school is traditionally organized. There are, however, committees for central responsibilities on campus. The committee's complete tasks based on their focus, and each teacher is on a committee. These additional duties are mandatory for all teachers and without compensation.

In her second year of teaching, Val began taking on administrative duties. Because she already engaged in some leadership practices, she decided to get her administrative credential and encouraged several teachers at her school to follow suit. Additionally, Val recalled:

> The principal would always throw in my face that I wasn't an administrator, so I didn't know better. So, a part of me was like I am going to get my admin

credential so now I know better, and that's where it came from. It was really reactionary.

Accordingly, she admitted never wanting to be an administrator. It was not until she was in the program to get her administrative credential that she genuinely even considered becoming an administrator. Nonetheless, she has yet to make the decision to become a principal and is currently a teacher who continues to take on administrative duties. She cited many reasons for not yet taking that next step, but extensively discussed two. She accredited her hesitancy to her belief that as an administrator, she would have to assume more masculine characteristics to be an efficient leader. She additionally acknowledged how an administrative position in her school is not available any time soon. Her connection to her students and colleagues overshadows her existing desire to be an administrator.

Phillip - Vigor

"I was brought up in a classroom," Phillip said with a twinkle in his eye. His mother was an elementary school teacher for 42 years in an urban city. He is a White male very aware of his privilege and how he can use that privilege to mediate opportunities for his students. He happily expressed, "I'm social justice on steroids." This is evident through his care and compassion for his students. These bonds and the potential of each of his students fuel his constant and fast paced administrative position.

Phillip loves to introduce himself as an urban educator. He has been in education for more than 20 years. He has worked in elementary, middle, high, and continuation schools. Phillip was a teacher for ten years working with kindergartners, sixth graders, and students in special education. Outside of the classroom, he has been a coordinator,

counselor, vice principal, principal, and even worked in the district office. However, he firstly identifies as a teacher. He proclaims, “My role maybe principal, but I’m a teacher. It’s just I teach adults. I teach kids. I teach everybody, and instead of the classroom being what I work in, my classroom is the whole school.”

He first became an administrator because he was asked to. His superior was leaving and recommended him for the position. Since then, he has been the one to turn to during challenging times, in a school or the district office. He has been transferred overnight to head and handle “troubled” schools. He turns schools into places of success and happiness. His honest demeanor and positive attitude are engaging. His experience is impressive and unquestionable. He stated in a matter of fact tone, “I am an expert in what I do,” and he is right. He told stories of how the state superintendent esteems him and asks for his advice. Phillip is filled with stories and predictions of what could be. He recognizes this generation as the greatest there has ever been, and he looks forward to do all he can to maximize their individual and collective success.

Kay – Revolution

Kay identifies as a Pinay, Ilocana woman. That particular region is known for some of the most challenging soil in the Philippines and as a result is known to have hardworking people. The Ilocanos were “recruited to work alongside the Mexican laborers in California and Hawaii plantations” and that is how Kay and her family came to this country. As a young woman of color, she acknowledged that she was developed as a leader from a very young age. She was involved with student organizations and maintained leadership positions as well. As a de-colonial scholar, she recognized that it was not until she went to a public university that she learned about her own history. The

invisibility she experienced through the curriculum she was inundated with focused on Eurocentric perspectives and ideals. She named this denial of knowledge as epistemological violence.

Kay worked as a social studies teacher at a continuation school for all grade levels for three years. As soon as she graduated from her teacher credential program, Kay remembered, "My principal and CEO of our charter school recognized my leadership, and in my first year of teaching, I was a lead teacher." Kay did not have the intention of becoming an administrator. Her leadership skills were used to innovate the school's curriculum and instructional model. She additionally helped in constructing the framework for creating projects with social justice themes. As a teacher, she noted and opposed certain practices and was going to request to be transferred into a coordinator's position. The school's growth and need for leadership encouraged her superiors to request she become an assistant administrator instead. She explained that she is not one to pursue leadership opportunities unless she is asked or senses a need for her contribution. She accepted the position because she was asked and realized the need.

Entering her fifth year in administration, Kay enjoys working within this organization. Kay does not have her administrative credential and does not foresee getting it. She feels confident that she does not want to be a principal in a traditional school structure. She feels supported and works to equally support her faculty. Her school exists under the governance of one principal. There are three assistant principals each focusing on specific duties. As in charge of instruction and curriculum, her position entails supervising teachers, observing them, and giving them feedback at ten different schools. Although her position can be stressful, Kay's school leadership is completely

accommodating and encourages their staff to take personal days when needed. The job is fast paced, but she contently expressed, “I’m involved in organizing spaces where I can do work that feels fulfilling and is healing for me, and to build community with people. So, I feel extremely supported.”

Don - Humility

As a Mexican child, Don distinctively recalled the division of classes as he lived in the remnants of the Spaniard caste system. He is not materialistic at all and accredits this to being financially marginalized as a youth. Don identifies as indigenous because he feels it allows him to rediscover his past and solidify his present. His migration to the United States occurred when he was still a teenager, and this experience helped form who he is as an educator. He is a father of two and identifies his responsibility of fatherhood as a beautiful one.

Don has been teaching for ten years covering sixth through twelfth grade Spanish classes for native and non-native speakers. His current placement permits him to focus on only the ninth grade class. His motivation for getting his administrative credential was based on identifying a deficiency at his previous school, and he wanted to help. He admitted his intention was never to become an administrator. But, he additionally confessed that he originally did not want to be a teacher either. He explained, in “my particular situation, the opportunities presented themselves. I accepted them not as a punishment, but as a sign of growth, and an opportunity to grow.”

Don categorized his administrative credential program as lacking reflection and very theory focused. He recollected:

> The challenge was the struggle with personal beliefs, the adaptation to the different areas of need of the school, and also to the constant changes of procedures, protocols, as well as the laws that need to be revised or are currently being revised. I think that's an ongoing process.

Getting his administrative credential forced him to negotiate and attempt to balance personal responsibility with his administrative duties and credential courses. He identifies sacrifice as an indisputable burden administrators must take on. His lack of participation in family responsibilities and absence from his children's achievements helped him make the decision to go back into the classroom. In addition, he still considered himself as a novice teacher and looked to improve his craft before leaving the classroom again. As he worked in one school most of his career, he expressed thinking he could be an administrator at any other school was egotistical. He left the first school he was working at as a part time administrator and full time teacher to return completely to the classroom. By doing so, he maintains balance and the opportunity to be the best version of himself to better serve his students.

Rene - Honor

To understand Rene, one has to first know, that in many ways, he identifies as an underdog. Although his experience, intelligence, and professional accomplishments prove otherwise. Rene identified as a "straight, Hispanic male." He was an army man and electrician who became a teacher, motivated by others who recognized his extensive skill set and unique perspective. Rene was a classroom teacher for thirteen years and has taught a plethora of classes in the social science department. His initial four years of working as a teacher's assistant and recent three years as an administrator, add up to

twenty years in education. Rene is proud of his background and has used each posting as a means to expand his "wisdom, knowledge, and examples of what to do and what not to do."

When asked to identify himself in the education community, Rene stated, "I'm a history teacher who happens to be an administrator." This perspective inspires him to see everything through a teacher-centered lens. Rene's army background instilled in him the viewpoint that, "Those who can, teach." Rene said he became an administrator because "I noticed myself, that I was resentful and stale in my teaching. And I go, this is where I either become one of those teachers who teaches the same lesson until retirement, or I switch it up and really influence young teachers coming in." He applied and was accepted to an administrative credential program in a public university. There he joined a collective of administrators whose various backgrounds all assisted in broadening their abilities as a community. This reinvigorated his practice and passion in education.

The district he works in made him a dean soon after. Within six months, he became an assistant principal at another school and has not looked back since them. After his position was defunded, his first placement at a large collection of schools with very specific challenges made his transition to his new placement much easier. His initial understanding was that he was going to be able to work with teachers, observing them developing their practice, and mentoring them. Instead, Rene is an administrator who focuses primarily in operations. This title includes the safety and security of the school along with the day-to-day necessary operations. He is additionally responsible for textbook adoptions, overseeing the Special Education and Social Studies departments along with the professional development and staff meetings.

Though in many ways, Rene is more fulfilled, the stress and burdens of his position have taken their toll on him personally. He describes, “You put so much of yourself into our careers, that you start chipping away at your self-care.” He described the stress his principal endures and expressed some concern about maintaining his health, professional responsibilities, and a successful, loving relationship with his wife. He went on to acknowledge that it is a continual struggle maintaining balance between his personal and professional responsibilities, but he will not give up and works at it everyday.

Cruz - Ambition

Cruz identifies as a Mexican male and currently is in his first official year as an administrator. He was a physical education instructor for eight years for grades kindergarten through high school. His initial intensions for becoming an administrator were to see the realities of how a school is run. He also wanted to use his expertise “a teacher and as a coach from a sports background to influence teachers.” His goal was to present teachers with positive alternatives so to not be deterred if overcome by negativity. He was inspired by the concept of “being a leader and being able to influence others.”

While obtaining his administrative credential, he was immediately assigned administrative duties along with his teaching responsibilities. Soon after, he acquired his credential, he was hired as an administrator. When he joined the administration, he recalled he had absolutely no idea what was waiting for him. According to Cruz, the qualifications for his job included merely having a bachelor’s degree. He is currently the Director of Operations and participants in the hiring and firing of staff, organizing field trip logistics, overseeing the Special Education and English Language Development

programs, and, primarily, the day-to-day logistics of running a school. The school leadership, as he describes it, is comprised of two principals and two vice principals. He knows there is a school board, but he has limited interactions with them and their decisions.

The role Cruz has is not an easy one, yet he maintains balance. He very adamantly believes he needs to disconnect from work the moment he leaves his campus, recognizing many administrators struggle with that ability. He attributes his ability to disconnect to his days as a coach. He additionally praises his wife for assisting him to keep balance. He strongly believes that carrying those burdens home is not healthy and can be damaging to someone's health and personal life.

Sage - Collaboration

Sage is a father, husband, and son. He identifies as a heterosexual, Colombian-American male. He is an educator. Sage has been involved with education in many different capacities. He began tutoring in high school and continued in college. He began his teaching career when he went to teach in a foreign country for four years. Upon his return, he went into a teacher education program and has worked for the district since then. He taught social studies for an additional seven years and has been an administrator for six years.

When he went to get his administrative credential, he participated in a residency program and while in the program his principal got a promotion and recommended him for the position. He responded that he was not ready. However, he recollected, "and then at the next faculty meeting, he announced to the staff that he got a promotion, and he wanted me to take over the school. And so, the decision was kind of made in that area."

Although unorthodox, he expressed he always enjoyed management to a certain degree along with supporting school vision. He did experience some leadership responsibilities when teaching in a foreign country, but he never expected it to happen in the district he works for so quickly. Sage reflected on his unfamiliarity with the administrator position. He described that he understood principles as the figurehead, those who speak for graduation and help struggling students. Beyond that, he acknowledged that he "had no clue what it meant to sit behind that desk and run a school." Now looking back he continues to strive for improvement. Despite his six-year experience, he feels he is "still in the process of learning to be a leader."

As Sage works at a district school, his directives come from the superintendent and school board. He works as the only administrator on his site and sometimes struggles with the load that translates to. This very clear hierarchy has always been challenging to Sage. He explained, "I'm more of a collaborative decision maker, and I hate being the one that says, 'No this is the final way through.'" His practice of collaborative leadership helps to distribute responsibilities that otherwise would fall squarely on his shoulders. Stress is something Sage is very familiar with, yet he has worked to maintain balance from the beginning of his placement. He not only honestly talks to parents and teachers about his boundaries, he explains his reasoning. He also spoke to the importance of promoting self-care with the faculty, as he understands the demands of the job.

As mentioned, Sage believes strongly in the value of collaboration. He encourages participation form his faculty and often defers to their expertise. He is part of the leadership team with some teachers, their coordinator, counselor, and himself. This is the team that makes decisions when it comes to scheduling, allocating certain funds, and

other similar decisions. He recognized that this leadership team shows elements of shared-leadership, but he said, “I haven’t been good at maintaining and creating that element where teachers feel that they can do it.” He more recently has a professional goal of encouraging teachers to be proactive, tapping into their own creativity.

Mel - Trust

“I am an educator,” Mel says with contentment and reflection. Her self-identified expertise is in instruction. Her various positions developing and working with instruction for many years validates her statement. She has been in education for more than thirty years. Mel identifies in her personal life as a global citizen. She also identifies as a European-American White person who grew up in Texas. She does not identify as a Texan as she feels she did not relate to many there. She purposely learned different languages and visited many countries to further her global citizen connection.

Mel has worked in the same district for 20 years. Her experience, however, extends beyond that as she has worked in several districts throughout the nation. She has held many teacher supervision, coordinator, and specialist positions. As she received her credential in the social sciences, she truly enjoyed her work as a specialist in the history curriculum. She remembered fondly, “I found that I was able to really help so many teachers because I’m just a nerd.”

She is currently finishing her third year as a principal in her present school. Mel was never an assistant principal and was assigned to her principal position. She got her administrative credential because she heard about a job she thought she would be good at. Once she got her credential, she “sat on it, until something interesting came up.” She ended up assisting with the accreditation process at her school and once the principal

retired, she was “volun-told” to take over. She said yes to the position because she did not want to be a classroom teacher any longer mentioning exhaustion along with financial incentives. When officially taking over the position, she was worried that because she was a newer member to the school community the teachers would not respect her. She carefully moved forward in her relationships with them “very softly” and by building trust.

When accepting the position, she told herself that she would only commit to the position for three years. She continued, “Three years are now up, and I have been applying, no one here knows that, and nothing has come up yet.” She reflected on her time as a principal proudly, recounting all their improvements since taking over. Within that time frame, Mel has achieved an extended accreditation, improvements in attendance and course completion, and instruction improvements. She cares for the students and is excited to continue her journey as an educator.

Sasha - Strength

Identifies as a Latina, specifically as Salvadoran-American. She is a first generation educator who, in some respects, has worked to achieve the American Dream. She is currently working at a high school as a math teacher and in a coordinator position, focusing on English Language Learners. She just completed her tenth year as an instructor and recently obtained her administrative credential. Her motivation for returning to school to acquire her administrative credential was initially financially driven to increase her position on the salary scale in her district. Sasha had absolutely no intention of becoming an administrator because she recognized it was a huge responsibility and burden. However, now that she has gone through the program, she is

revisiting her practice in general and acknowledges the need for administrators such as herself.

As Sasha discussed her current position, she shared that her responsibilities are not what she anticipated as a coordinator. “I find that a lot of my time and energy is compliance, it’s paperwork.” Although she took her position in an effort to help English Language Learners reach their goals, she does not feel able to do that work within the limitation of her workday and other responsibilities. She communicated that with the administrators she sees, compliance is 90 percent of their work. Sasha’s position is divided between teaching and coordinating but feels that she is not excelling in either.

Sasha’s current school is organized in a typical hierarchical fashion. She communicated that in her school, there is a governing board and instances of collective decision-making. The governing board is where decisions are made on paper, but, in reality, the principal and vice-principal mostly make decisions. There are times where she agrees with this practice and times where she feels her administrators can engage the collective more efficiently. She does not currently anticipate ever becoming an administrator, but can visualize eventually becoming a coordinator full time. Sasha expressed a deep responsibility to her students. She is seeking a position that best suits her abilities and one where she can best serve her students.

Arnel – Thoughtful

Arnel identifies as a Chicano and a social justice educator. He is a first generation Mexican American. He currently works as a mathematics high school teacher. He has been a teacher for ten years and has also taken on leadership positions in his school. Arnel was encouraged to get his administrative credential by his wife, Sasha, after she

had already completed her program. Arnel also was motivated financially but also wanted to improve his understanding of social justice leaders and rediscover what a social justice educator was. Arnel also spoke to how his interest in administration was in regards to answering, “How do we go from being in the classroom and focusing on social justice in the classroom and how now do we do that with the school as a whole?”

Social justice motivates Arnel, and this can be identified through his practices and lens. To him, being a social justice leader considers how his actions can benefit his students as well as their communities. Arnel does anticipate becoming an administrator in the future, but not anytime soon. He currently feels he struggles to influence change with adults. This is a practice he feels he must further develop before he can even apply for an administration position.

The school that Arnel works at is traditionally structured with a principal and assistant principals. Unfortunately, they experience high turnover among the administrators as every year they have hired a replacement administrator. This constant change in the leadership can produce inconsistencies and frustrations among the staff and students. He has been working at his current school since his student teaching. Despite being torn about the decision, he recently decided to relocate to a school closer to his home due to the commute. Arnel is a passionate social justice educator and is working to develop and define himself as a social justice school leader.

Julian - Consideration

Julian’s automatic identifiers include a male from Asian descent. Julian received his bachelors and masters degree in mathematics and his doctorate in mathematics education. He was a K-12 math teacher for all levels for twelve years in the east coast. He

moved to California for the prospect of being in higher education. His first position at a university was as an assistant professor. He eventually was hired as a ten-year professor and stayed there for twenty years. He currently works in the Chancellor's office.

When Julian was first asked to run for department chair, he turned down the position. He was asked again a second time and accepted because he felt it was his time. He had to run through an election process where his fellow faculty members voted for him and his associate chair to assume the position. He served one complete term and left during the second term. As a department chair, he recalled that the position sometimes was very challenging and those who serve it are often unappreciated. He explained that those who take on the position are technically still faculty members with reassigned time for administrative duties assigned. Being a department chair also required one to work for twelve months instead of the ten that professors are contracted for and, thus, requires different time commitments than professors. He emphasized that anyone in the administrative position will make many mistakes but that it is part of the learning experience.

Brisa - Self-Awareness

Brisa is an Italian Mexican woman who additional identifies as a: girlfriend, daughter, sister, auntie, friend, Buddhist, athlete, traveler, explorer, and adventurer. "When I wake up in the morning, I identify as a woman and a teacher always first." Brisa has worked in elementary, middle, and high schools and within different universities. Her extensive background in education allows her keep in mind many perspectives when making decisions for her faculty and students.

Brisa described her journey into education by stating, “Well, I kind of fell into teaching by accident.” She got a bachelor’s degree in sociology and political science but could not gain employment in those fields. She had a friend who was a teacher who invited her to visit her classroom. Although she did not prefer working with the younger children, she was fascinated by education. She decided soon after to get her teaching credential. Once she got her masters, she expressed it all clicked and, she went into the classroom. She started teaching kindergarten and moved up to eighth grade English. Her thirst for knowledge motivated her to get her doctorate. Even though she expressed she could have stayed teaching, she recalls, “ I really felt like I could give back more if I were serving teachers candidates to go into inner city schools.” She purposely applied to be a professor in the higher education institution she currently works for. Brisa was accepted the associate chair for five years because of the release time she would be granted. She did not anticipate the workload but worked hard to improve. Brisa has recently accepted the position of department chair. Brisa enjoys a challenge. Her current position has required to her to step outside of her comfort zone and is pushing her to grow exponentially.

Her current position as a department chair means she is both an administrator and a faculty member. However, she voiced, “I’ll always identify as a teacher first. I don’t ever want to lose that.” She goes further by adding that the importance for her as a professor of pre-service teachers is not only to teach those students but observe them in a K-12 setting “as an opportunity to see what is happening in the classroom.” All of these responsibilities do add up to heavy administrative and teacher loads. She strives, nonetheless, to remain balanced and is highly aware that she cannot sustain this level of

work for too long. Although she never wanted to be an administrator, she takes her job seriously and works to improve everyday.

David – Vision

David is an African-American male who considers himself a "person-centered educator who is connected to the growth of individuals within the community." Both of his parents were educators. He said, "He came into education naturally." His first position in education was when he was placed as an instructional assistant in a special education classroom. He went on to become a resource specialist at his local middle school. Soon after, he transitioned to high school as a psychology teacher, which aligned with his degree in psychology. He went on to teach mathematics, driver's education, social studies, along with other humanities courses. After teaching for a few years, he went back and received his teaching credential, masters, and eventually, his doctorate. He began getting his administrative credential but was deterred because his values and with those of the administration program did not correspond to each other.

Once hired as a professor, he participated in grant writing. Because he felt that the administration identity was not part of his career track, he stayed away from any administration positions for some time and focused on grant-funded projects. The chair of the department, Brisa, recently asked him to be an associate chair, and he accepted. He now can envision possibly becoming chair, associate dean, dean, and even the provost. As a current associate chair, he is embracing this newer part of his identity.

Typically, department chairs and associate chairs are voted in together. The previous department chair, Julian, left his position midway during his second term due to a promotion. This allowed no time for a vote, and, instead, he was appointed. There are

still moments of learning and growth. However, he is happy that his current position and superior allows for this growth through her support and forgiveness when he makes mistakes.

Discussion on Administrator Profiles

Each participant has experienced unique circumstances when acquiring their administrative credential or position. The spectrum of experience both as teachers and as administrators is sufficient for the purposes of this study. Initially, many of the participants struggled to combine Zapatista practices with administrative ones. However, as the interview progressed, the participants shared more and more opportunities for implementation. In many cases, they identified instances where they were in some way integrating these practices already. This, many times, was not through systematic procedures, but instead through individual or small collective work. Many participants were in highly stressful positions, impacting their personal lives to some degree. These realities continuously point to the need for systematic change.

Throughout the interview process, I asked the participants specific questions on all Zapatista principles and practices that emerged during the interviews with the Zapatista delegation and *encuentro* participants. As the administrators began piecing together this puzzle of Zapatista-inspired leadership in secondary schools, some principles were joined and some were focused on more than others. The themes that emerged were the same as those presented in the previous chapter: *Servir y no Servirse, Mandar Obedeciendo,* and *Caminando Preguntamos*. However, the administrators offered concrete examples of these practices and their application into school leadership practices. They expressed examples of situations they had witnessed or experienced using

these practices. In addition, they were encouraged to imagine opportunities these practices could be implemented, describing what that would look like. The following is what they constructed.

Theme One: Servir Y No Servirse – To Serve: Not Self-Serve

The participants articulated specific practices that are aligned with the concept of service, *Servir y no Servirse*. Although most of the administrators work in traditional leadership structures, they were each, in their own way, working to better themselves in their positions. For some, theses efforts were based on their own awareness that their practices were not sustainable. Within their means, they attempted to take steps towards accountability. These steps were through alternative leadership practices and community involvement.

Many participants discussed the possibility of rotation and coupled it to some sort of shared leadership. Brisa contemplated what the positions could look like if instead of separate responsibilities, the principals and vice-principals could share duties. Changing it to co-leaders who receive the same training and are essentially interchangeable. Kay agreed and justified her reasoning by stating, "These institutions are structured in ways to reinforce power and power relationships…and if you break that down by sharing those responsibilities, I think it would create a different relational system between people." Similarly, Phillip advocated for flattening the hierarchies at schools as much as possible for better overall efficiency. The exercises of envisioning these practices were an opportunity, as Brisa stated, to "being creative about what leadership looks like." This creativity was used to discuss the possible implementation of an alternative rotating leadership.

Alternative Leadership - Rotation

The rotation that the Zapatistas practice is very specific and works well in their setting. This same process could not work in an American high school. Understanding this, the participants were asked to conceptualize a model where the leaders rotated identifying advantages and disadvantages to such a structure. The concept of rotation in the leadership was one many of the administrator participants were unfamiliar with. This, however, allowed them to essentially create a system combining different successful elements from various leadership practices and models. As many cast aside their hesitations and biases, they began constructing and creating a system they felt confident in based on their own experiences.

Rotation Logistics. From the onset, Julian declared, "Ever since I was in K-12, I always believed that principalship and administratorship should be on a rotation." However, in order to implement rotation, there would have to be a type of selection process to decide who can rotate in and out of what position. Amada suggested deciding who would rotate into an administrative position would have to be based on teacher evaluations. She continued that not all teachers should be considered, for there are some teachers who would only want to teach and not transition into an administrative position. Phillip added that many may not want the responsibility that comes with being the principal. In terms of selecting candidates to rotate into positions of leadership, most participants asserted that some sort of system was necessary for rotation in leadership to properly function.

Several participants decided on rotating between a select few. Don considered rotation not only among principals and vice-principals but also included counselors and

teachers in the rotation. Val contended that this group should be comprised of four administrators. She expressed, “It would be more circular.” She continued that such a model could create some consistency in knowing who was next in the rotation. Sage additionally made reference to a circular model by suggesting that once a singular principal’s term was served, they would rotate out of an administrative position and into the classroom, making room for their replacement. Sage expressed, “there would be an opportunity for everyone on staff to have that opportunity to be the administrator, as well as to be a teacher on site.” Rene constructed a model with one principal and four assistant principals. The principals would serve their term and then rotate back into the classroom. The assistant principals would serve their term and either transition back into the classroom or move to the principalship. Teachers could rotate into an assistant principal position as well, and eventually a principalship. David’s model first began with teachers. He articulated that once teachers are successful in their own classrooms, they could rotate to becoming a teacher leader. After they felt confident in their role as a leader, they could then rotate into the administrative position. Val identified that such a leadership aligns with her own beliefs of what leadership should be. She explained, “For me, it has always been that the teachers have the power; it should come from the community and the ground up, and we all have a voice.” This concept of ground up leadership is not an upside down model, but does allow everyone with the desire to attain varied leadership positions in their own school site, servicing the students in different and necessary ways.

Cruz, Brisa, and Amada spoke more to a situation where titles do not rotate but responsibilities do. Cruz discussed a team of school leaders and how all administrative

duties can rotate to encourage balance and improve knowledge. Kay agreed that the rotation of roles among administrators can increase understanding and compassion. In addition, she mentioned, “When you have an administrative role, it gives you some agency in actually shaping what it is or what needs to happen.” Whether a rotation of leaders or roles, Mel remarked how these practices can increase understanding and empathy for those in the positions, as the assumption is that many will have undergone similar struggles.

Phillip mentioned a model in a school he oversees practicing rotation among their coordinators. He explained that his coordinators volunteer for the position and have the option to return to the classroom when their term is completed. He described that many of his previous coordinators moved on to be administrators and some returned to the classroom. He contended that those who returned to the classroom have improved in their teaching practice. Don expressed that at his school they are divided into smaller groups. He conveyed his satisfaction, particularly, with the size of the groups because it enables teachers to voice their concerns and confidences and creates the space for more meaningful conversations. Rene concurred with the importance of the coordinator position by expressing that everyone should have an opportunity to hold that position. Brisa shed some light on the way it worked in her higher education institution by saying that her department has different committees, and faculty members run those committees. There are also less formal groups that are not official committees but take on certain projects. She additionally suggested for high schools to divide into similar committees based on interests to encourage more participation. For her, this has helped with the load of her administrative responsibilities.

Term Limits. The participants additionally considered the duration of the terms for the administrators. Mel considered one-year term. Rene suggested the principals serve a two-year term, and the assistant principals serve a three-year term to provide for some stability during the rotations. Sage agreed that the principal position should last two years, the "first year kind of learning the ropes, the second year training the next person who's coming in." Don agreed with Sage but added that a third year should focus primarily on reflection to improve practice individually and for the school community. The department chair participants all suggested a three year term. Both Val and Amada considered a four-year rotation among the administrators. Cruz and Phillip agreed on a five-year rotation. Phillip believed it takes about five years to even learn how to be an administrator and a longer term would create a stagnancy in the leadership.

Rotating into the Classroom. Most participants highlighted the significance of administrators returning to the classroom to teach. Rene featured this in his model by saying, "none of these groups are far removed from the classroom. Three years at most." Kay reflected on her own practice and admitted that being away from the classroom for five years is a weakness. She communicated that so much has changed since she was a teacher. Rene agreed by expressing, "You don't want to ever be stale and so disconnected from the classroom that you don't know what's going on. You have to go back to the classroom." Brisa concurred and noted that many administrators "forget what it was like to be in the classroom." Julian expressed how returning to teaching can ground one in the current context. The participants also identified the value of returning to the classroom by expressing their own desires to return to teaching. Rene confessed, "I miss teaching history." Phillip proclaimed, "Hell, I would go back!"

The participants emphasized the value of returning to the classroom and worked to identify different ways to address that need. Arnel explained, teachers focus on what is best for their students and administrators typically maintain a wider lens. This practice of rotation could lessen that gap. Val and Kay also considered splitting the administrator's time similar to department chairs, based on percentages. No matter how, Val plainly stated that all administrators should go back into classrooms and share in the responsibility of educating students. Kay shared that counselors at her schools teach a class to the seniors. This class is not a core subject, but asserted including school staff in the classroom was a valuable practice that further developed them as educators and school stakeholders. She continued, " It just kind of gives them another layer of understanding of the learning process." Sage agreed that rotation could offer a deep appreciation for the work of others.

Additional advantages to leadership rotation. Many discussed how adding a rotation to the leadership could help with their workload. Sage conveyed that if rotation could work, it would spread out much of the stress and responsibility that comes with being an administrator. Val communicated how a rotation in leadership could help in adapting to the ups and downs in one's personal life that can impact job performance. Val and Rene underlined how this rotation may help in rejuvenating teachers who may be on the brink of burn out. Rene recognized how this rotation could assist with high turnover rates among administrators. He asserted that the initial challenge of getting principals to commit may be softened by the clear term limits. Sage declared that offering the opportunity to rotate positions "could offer enough of a variety that could make my years at the school site even more enjoyable," he continued, "I could imagine that."

Cruz, Don, David, and Julian agreed that the chance to rotate new leaders to different positions could cultivate new ideas. Accordingly, David voiced that these new perspectives could help to reframe school practices providing improvement not previously identified. He additionally voiced that rotation could aid in disposing of stagnant cultural school practices. Don discussed how rotating in and out of a position could offer opportunities for reflection on strengths and weaknesses, looking for chances of growth. Don continued that the act of rotation will be challenging because it can place people outside of their comfort zone. But, he believed that this will encourage a critical perspective and, ultimately, progression. Don also added, that the reflection should be practiced continuously, throughout the rotations, to make any adjustments necessary to constantly improve the structure, verifying it meets the needs of the school, staff, and students. Justifying this belief, Julian insisted rotation could remove tunnel vision because it offers different perspectives and, thus, a better understanding of school positions along with their opportunities and obstacles.

Challenges to leadership rotation. Many participants insisted on the significance of consistency of culture, vision, and mission among all school faculty and staff. A leading possible confrontation many voiced was the challenge of creating and maintaining a unifying goal and culture. Mel began that rotation could work if all staff and faculty members were deciding on goals together. She noted, there would be no need for tedious convincing, for the terms and conditions would already be set. She described the staff and faculty would need to be like-minded and with similar backgrounds. Rene interjected that a shared vision is key. Don illustrated that these similarities will result in a school that is more united. David expressed the importance of the creation,

development, and implementation of a solid culture at all levels. Don asserted that this common culture and vision must be achieved through open dialogue. And additionally, David named it as a cultural maintenance that is revisited and revised as a collective. He continued by conveying that once that culture is identified and embraced by the community, administrators, teachers, administrator assistants, and students, a rotating leadership "would be a phenomenal approach."

This is clearly a necessity; however, it can be very challenging to actually practice. Amada mentioned how she has been working to foster and promote a shared vision at her school and has found it very difficult. She divulged that before the process of creating a collective goal even begins, everyone must agree that such a thing is even needed. Moreover, assuming once everyone agrees on a goal, the complexities of how to achieve that goal can offer many varied paths. Val documented how her school, using a distributed leadership, often makes decisions together but then added the obstacle of arriving at one solution.

In relation to practicing in a similar frame of mind, Rene insisted that rotation can allow for veteran and newer teachers to influence each other's practice for the better. David added that rotation could nurture a culture of leadership. Rene does express that this kind of model would not allow teachers to only be teachers. He conveyed that everyone will have to be involved to some capacity outside of the classroom. Brisa agreed and extended the conversation by adding that administrators would need to provide teachers these leadership responsibilities while also investing in their training and development. At the same time, this investment in teacher growth would require added

teacher responsibilities for faculty members who may be near the brink, carrying their already heavy load.

The question of compensation was discussed by many participants. Don pictured a scenario where administrators made less than the six-figure income he has witnessed and were alternatively paid within the teacher salary scale. However, both Rene and Sage communicated that technically their rate had increased, but not in relation to the amount of work they became responsible for. Val proposed that perhaps all faculty and administrators should be paid equally. This, nonetheless, places the administrative position in a delicate state, for Mel conceded that a motivating factor for her to take the administrative position was financial. Some participants expressed similar indications. Altering this notion of administration compensation could be problematic as it steps away from cultural practices many are comfortable with.

Alternative leadership conclusion. The participants formed specific structures to try to address the flaws within their own leadership structures by not only implementing Zapatista practices but also integrating their own imaginations of what was possible. Most of the participants did speak to the inadequacy of a hierarchical structure that depends so much on one individual. Rene conveyed how if a school's functionality is "hinging on one person, there is a problem." Brisa agreed that when not relying merely on one individual, the roles and responsibilities of the position can still be satisfied. In visualizing this model, Rene articulated that this structure is similar to a puzzle where the pieces are able to fit into each other, but they have not been fully interlocked because they are still fluid. "If you take one puzzle piece away, the picture is still visible." This illustration aids to describe how a more horizontal and rotating structure may be the

resolution to many of the dilemmas school administrators face. Val identified that this practice of administrator rotating in and out of the position would not work at every school site. Nonetheless, she remained hopeful that it could work somewhere.

Community Engagement

The importance of community engagement in schools was something none of the administrator participants denied. Each expressed the value community engagement can have on many aspects of a school. Phillip communicated that involving the community can shape a shared ownership of the school. This shared ownership creates a practice where various stakeholders have an investment in the school not for financial gain, but gain on a broader impact, gain for society. The community engagement referred to in this section is not just that of the surrounding community, but it includes the school community as well. Community members, parents, guardians, staff members, teachers, administrators, students, and extended families are all part of the community for this discussion on community engagement.

Community engagement begins with the community. Both David and Kay specifically stated that before schools can address their own vision, mission, and goals, those of the surrounding community must be assessed. In this instance, assumptions should not be made. Kay continued that a real leader studies and absorbs the needs of the community. This information is used to create structures and processes that help guide people's individual and collective progress. Cruz contended that involving the community many times can begin with showing up to community events. However, he indicated that this should not be the only method of involvement, for it can show depreciation for the community. Arnel spoke to being an active member in the

community “and utilizing community resources not just for the benefit of our students but for the benefit of our community as well.” Brisa advised that teachers must also learn about the communities they work in order to better serve their students. She conveyed that through this practice, teachers are able to identify and appreciate the resources available in the communities. One cannot work in isolation of the other, for they are irreversibly connected.

Engagement also includes parent involvement. Despite the limitation of traditional parent involvement, participants expressed viable suggestions. Don and Cruz recommended having an open door policy that encouraged honesty, where parents can frankly discuss their comments or concerns. Sage insisted understanding parents and their backgrounds can greatly impact their participation. In recounting a personal experience, he discussed how his school asked for volunteers for a small parent committee. There was minimal expressed interest. Eventually, a mother raised her hand and informed him that she was available but could not read or write. Sage assured her that her opinion and participation were the priority would be extremely valued. In recalling this incident, he spoke to how sometimes administrators and teachers make assumptions about parents, but knowing who they are can encourage better suited practices for all types of parents.

Cruz expressed how community engagement among administrators can translate as collective discussions and input. In his current school, Cruz communicated that his roles and responsibilities vary from his fellow assistant administrator. This rigid separation does not allow him to contribute in anyway to issues his colleague may be experiencing. They each deal with their duties in isolation. Cruz instead recommended an opportunity for administrators to work together on issues in a collaborative nature as

opposed to a competitive one. He suggested that this collective culture should also be part of teacher practices. Mel and Cruz voiced how a system that encourages collaboration would assist in their practice and growth. Administrators, both principals and vice principals, and teachers are part of a community that directly focus on the education of students. These individuals form a collective, and as Rene declared, “No one is greater than the collective.” Brisa also noted the value of cohesiveness as practitioners. Amada also indicated that working together can reinforce that no one person has all the answers because everyone should acknowledge their own and each other’s strengths and weaknesses.

Assessing teacher and administrator need is also very valuable for community engagement. Amada and Kay both voiced feeling supported by their supervisors in terms of work and life balance. They both shared moments where their immediate supervisors encouraged them to take days off when they began feeling stressed. This support of each other proved especially helpful to Kay, and she is able to transfer that same belief with her own staff, encouraging their own balanced lives. Kay underscored that more administrators need to encourage a work-life balance. In an effort to support her own staff at the higher education level, Brisa recently has refrained from trying to solve the problems of her faculty members, but instead asks them for ideas on how she can help them. She finds that this form of support helps in taking some burden off of her own load and at the same time empowers her faculty to identify what they need in order to progress.

The honest practice of community engagement comes with forming sincere and respectful relationships. Several participants shared their strive to create work

relationships with their teachers. Phillip asserted the significance of relationships and instructs all his principals to build, but not promote based on, relationships. Amada communicated that she begins to form these bonds once a teacher begins to share personal information first. With an opposite approach, Kay shared that she discloses all of her identities to her staff once they are hired. She explained:

> Literally the first thing I do is I sit down with them- and I think it's like an hour and a half meeting- where I go very in depth about my race, class, gender, sexuality, the neighborhood I grew up in, my educational level, my ability status, my citizenship status, my sexuality. I go over all of that. I basically, in that process of sharing all that, share a lot about who I am, and I humanize myself.

Kay asks her staff member to do the same if they feel comfortable sharing. She conveyed that this practice encourages a mutual respect, and it helps provide context for the different decisions each makes in their relationship together. Kay, Don, and Cruz went on to mention the value of small, thoughtful actions. Don and Cruz expressed the essential practice of greeting everyone in the morning and saying goodbye at the end of the day. Cruz added that he purposefully asks about the lives of his teachers and asks follow up questions. He expressed a genuine interest in his workers and enjoys getting to know more about them and who they are. Kay voiced that these types of actions focus on everyone's humanity and offer opportunities to heal from oppressive socializations. This space of honesty and healing can encourage authentic relationships.

Challenges with Community Engagement. Transparency is helpful in establishing positive relationships. Unfortunately, transparency is not completely possible with those in the administrative position. Kay expressed that there are certain pieces of

information she cannot share due to her legal liabilities. These actions can be sometimes mislabeled, where people assume the worst. Rene recalled an situation where a faculty member was fired because he put students in danger. Because this faculty member was well liked, when Rene was forced to release him, he received backlash. Other faculty judged his actions as cold and inappropriate without having all the information. He continued by accepting that with information comes responsibility and burden. Sage accredited this reality to his isolation from other staff members.

Working to create real relationships as opposed to those with agendas can be challenging. Some of the participants noted forming bonds with their colleagues as a desire to get to know them. Others expressed engaging in relationships to sometimes verify compliance. In addition, some participants expressed experiencing relationships that show favoritism resulting in biased decision making. Several practicing administrators mentioned acts of manipulation for those administrators who were more guarded with their staff.

Servir Y No Servirse Conclusion

Many of the participants discussed alternative leadership and community engagement as practices part of a larger paradigm of leadership. These practices are not meant to be presented in a vacuum, but instead each plays a role in creating sustainable and efficient leadership in secondary schools. This section reviewed structures inspired by Zapatista practices and principals. The following section discusses leader traits and actions implementing Zapatista practices.

Theme Two: Mandar Obedeciendo – Lead by Obeying

As mentioned in Chapter 5, the direct translation of *Mandar Obedeciendo* is to lead by obeying. However, the practices associated to this principle are ones of true democratic leadership. This theme highlights certain leadership actions and characteristics that all participants agreed as transferrable and beneficial to the administrator position. The following theme discusses instances where the administrator participants witnessed or participated in the subsequent traits.

Administrator Identified Leadership Traits

Leadership can be a convoluted term, and leaders can lead in highly complex circumstances. Thus, the administrator participants shared these traits understanding the process of leadership as a long journey that cannot be boxed into a few traits. The participants discussed the following leadership traits more as dispositions and personal goals to reach for. These traits considered how to better all aspects of the administrator position by striving for personal growth.

Listener. The leadership trait most discussed was the importance of being a good listener. All current high school administrators noted this as a vital part of good practice. Despite this shared understanding, many additionally divulged the rarity of consistent and authentic listening practices from administrators, as they had not witnessed it as often as it is required. Its scarcity as a practice does not overpower its need, and all present administrators articulated further developing this leadership characteristic.

Many participants communicated their own strategies to be better listeners in their daily actions. Rene mentioned that before going into a meeting where a decision needs to be made, he does his best to not have already made a decision. He focuses on listening to

different perspectives and making his decision based on the information his staff members provided him with. He additionally recognized that some of his fellow colleagues are not so open-minded. Don likens such listening practices to happier work environments.

Don also declared how sometimes listening can help in practicing prudence to verify understanding. He continued by suggesting that eventual verbal communication is well thought out and not reactionary. This practice of listening, Kay believed, honors the intellectual capabilities of her teachers. Phillip also asserted that he listens and values the contribution of his coordinators, acknowledging that they were voted into their position by their peers and represent his teachers' voices.

Cruz recommended practicing active listening in all conversations with teachers replacing the dismissive behaviors he has witnessed from administrators in the past. Kay agreed and when appropriate, she asks her faculty to offer their perspective instead of imposing her understandings on them before they have a chance to speak. Phillip spoke to how he applies his practice of listening to all his staff members, for each provides different viewpoints and expertise.

Kay shared a current listening practice her school is developing. In an effort to better understand the needs of faculty, Kay and other administrators are going on a listening tour. They sent out previous questions to their teachers and are going to visit each school to listen to their comments, concerns, and suggestions. This process is one rooted in trust and a desire to understand. The information from each school will be documented and incorporated into the final decision. Listening can also come down to practical information. When considering professional development topics, Phillip directly

asks his teachers what they need to improve their practice. The act of providing his teachers with questions instead of answers puts his teachers, he believed, in positions of authority and motivates their creativity. This transparency also helps to create a space where teachers can practice honesty as there are not based on punitive purposes.

With listening, comes the act of communicating. Some participants noted the significance of learning how to communicate efficiently, honestly, and kindly. Sage mentioned how interpersonal skills have been indispensable in his practice. Cruz insisted significance daily communication between him and his faculty and staff. Don voiced that although being direct can be essential as an administrator, kindness and consideration should not be overlooked. Don went on to indicate that communication skills are not only needed for adult communication but also with students. Being aware of the different needs of students, parents, staff, and community are considerations he makes even in his dress attire. In valuing communicating and listening, Phillip recommended that all administrators should be trained to some degree in counseling along with the practice of de-escalation. Both could help in moments of conflict with all stakeholders to verify the final decision made is one from a reflective and positive position.

Humility. Humility was another key practice most participants categorized as significant. The participants directly connected being a humble leader with accepting administrators do not know it all. Administrators and, at times, their own staff can hold this perception. And, practicing administrators in this study worked to redefine the administrator title and themselves as leaders by leading with humility.

To Val, humility began with valuing staff and faculty. She regards the additional act of admitting one's mistakes is important to being a humble administrator. But,

humility is needed at every tier in educational settings. Sage expressed that because his staff is very forgiving, he has had the courage to not only admit his mistakes, but work towards a solution. Sage, Brisa, and Amada expressed how they practice humility by not only admitting they do not know all the answers, but also encouraging teachers to contribute to problem solving. Sage and Amada, both, in separate cases prompted teachers to research a certain topic and share it with the group to guide the collective to make the best decision. As a teacher, Don conveyed that delegating to teacher leaders can be very validating. At his campus, this act builds comfort, security, and acceptance because it shows the teacher leaders their expertise are valued enough to participate in decision making.

Rene wholly advocated for humble leaders. He recalled a recent conversation where a supervisor took credit for a grant Rene applied for and received. This act further validated his belief that leaders need to lead with humility. Contradictorily, the recent increase in enrollment in Sage's school is probably due demographic shifts. However, Sage disclosed that he will, nonetheless, proudly continue to praise to his recruitment team, attributing their increased student population to them. Phillip shared that he typically lifts up teachers before he ever will praise himself.

Many expressed that to lead with humility one must participant in everyday actions that happen in a school. Phillip declared he was not above physical labor and helped out whether it be handing out textbooks or anything else the school needed. Phillip commented that he had swept classes when the custodian was absent. He voiced that humility entail being the last one to eat, buying the first round of drinks during happy hour, or waiting at the table while everyone gets their buffet meals. Cruz described the

value of being present around campus. He determined that his constant presence in classrooms and in the halls resulted in teachers feeling more at ease because his teachers knew he was within reach should they need anything. Arnel insisted, “I think in order for a leader to be a strong leader and be seen as a good leader, they need to be visible.” Sage agrees with the importance of presence not just with staff, but also with students. He makes it a note to visit classrooms at least once a week to talk to students and address any general concerns. For Sasha, humility and trust go hand in hand, where one cannot truly exist without the other.

Trust. The act of trust is also worthy of discussing when highlighting best practices for administrators. Trust should be the foundation for the relationships formed on campus. However this trust does not suddenly appear, it must be cultivated. In speaking to the weight of trust in throughout his practice, Phillip asserted, “You have to trust your faculty, you can’t run an organization if you don’t have trust.” Trust in school relationships extends to all. Mel shared that recently she shared an honest reflection with her supervisor about a new district wide policy. This reflection could have been misinterpreted, but instead her supervisor took her perspective and reflected on it. Mel commented that the trust in their relationship allowed her to openly discuss a policy and this is the same trust she promotes with her own staff to better overall practice. Rene expressed his own trust in his teachers and their abilities when he encourages them to reach beyond the classroom and traditional teaching.

In their conversations, administrators need to be honest with their faculty and staff members. Mel advocated for a school practice of assuming positive intent as a helpful tool when having conversations with her staff. Phillip insisted this can help in having

those critical conversations for personal and professional growth for his faculty. Administrators can, at times, make sensitive decisions that can impact the entire school. Rene expressed how when administrators make these decisions, staff and faculty need to trust that they made the best decision with the present limitations, keeping the school's overall best interest at heart.

Trust can also be practiced through the provision of resources and spaces. At times, resources can be guarded and even hoarded because of the lack of trust among colleagues. Arnel, Don, and Sasha advocated for administrators to give needed resources to teachers. Don inserted that doing so with limited restrictions can promote creatively. To Arnel, successful administrators are highly capable in delegation. Kay indicated that administrators can additionally show trust by allowing for time and space to brainstorm and contribute to conversations at hand. Kay asserted, "You create these empowering conditions that show trust in peoples' ability to contribute ideas that will guide the collective. Don recommended that trust can also be expressed through a freedom to create one's own curriculum. He has developed his own curriculum and believed that this should be granted to all subjects, core or not. This trust overrides fear that can sometimes plague administrators and their relationships with their faculty.

Caring. The participants all agreed that administrators have heavy loads. However, no matter how overwhelmed they become, administrators cannot forget their primarily purpose. One method to aid in keeping students and their wellbeing forefront and center is by leading from positions of care. Phillip challenges all of his principals by reminding them "being principal is not just running a school, it's taking care of every child, every parent, at that school and creating that environment where they can call you

because they know you are safe." Don conveyed that this care transcends into relationships by not only asking about someone's day, but really caring about them as humans. Sasha recalled my instances of being talked down to and how the alternative could improve the school culture. Kay mentioned she shows this care with her faculty by asking about the goals of her faculty and staff and supports them with those goals for the entire year. Arnel expressed how as teachers have love for their students, administrators have to have love for their teachers and staff members. Phillip communicated his care proudly and joyously by talking to parents and instructing them not to worry about test scores, but instead the happiness of their child. He informs them that his students' happiness and wellbeing are what fuels his job as an administrator.

Adaptable. Many look to their administrator as one who can adapt. With that flexibility comes being able to identify a problem and come up with a unique method to address it and adapt that solution when needed. Amada began with, "My goal is to help them." Once someone tells her about a problem, she immediately begins considering many solutions. As a veteran, Phillip voiced that he uses bureaucracy against itself. When a policy is disseminated throughout the district, Phillip and his staff assess the policy. In the instance that the policy is not beneficial for their school, they brainstorm. He does not defiantly refuse to instill the policy. Instead he addresses the district and says, "'Well, this is the plan that we're going to do to address it.' And you work out that plan with your faculty on board. I've never been told, 'No.' They kind of appreciate you telling them, 'This is how we are going to do it.'" This practice is his alternative to organizational defiance. Being an adaptable also requires being knowledgeable on policies and laws that impact schools. This awareness can be challenging as change can come swiftly. Sage

commented that at his school, “The only constant is change.” His awareness of this has influenced his practice and that of his teachers. This flexibility allows them as a school to continue searching and experimenting until they find the best solution.

Mandar Obedeciendo Challenges

Although many can agree that the aforementioned characteristics are important for administrators, actually practicing them can prove difficult in current school environments. The culture in schools is ingrained in many policies and practices of the school and merely encouraging these different methods of practice is not enough.

Sexism. Many of the female participants highlighted sexism as a concrete obstacle they face in their efforts for improved practice. Amada shared many instances of micro-aggressions she has experienced in the past three years as an administrator. She has noticed that many similar actions between herself and her male principal are perceived completely differently. She contended that this difference is rooted in sexism. As a female administrator she divulged having to endure push back on initiatives and policy changes primarily from male teachers. Rene’s experience of being a male assistant principal to a female principal coincides with Amada’s. Rene expressed constantly having to address people to the principal when the automatic assumption is made that he is the sole authority in the room. Don expressed complete satisfaction with his female principal and has quieted and negated claims of her incompetence by fellow school colleagues and stakeholders. Rene, Don, and Amada expressed the value of having a supportive staff to constantly combat the sexism administrators can face.

Stereotypical qualities of female and male leaders were also mentioned in referencing the sexism women administrators tolerate. Val shared that one of the reasons

she has not become an administrator is because she does not want to take on masculine characteristics. Sasha also mentioned one of her hesitancies in becoming an administrator was she did not want to be so assertive. Amada also voiced this opposition can be noted in her methods of being. In her leadership practice, she feels she identifies more with stereotypical male qualities. As she is a more private individual, she does not share personal information unless there is a strong relationship. These practices have resulted in complaints against her and common negativity towards her.

Fear. The assumptions made about administrators can be further ingrained in what Cruz identified as the "myth of the administrator." Cruz declared that this myth is one where the administrator incites fear among all their staff and students. In order to address this, Cruz described various practices to foster positive staff relationships. Nonetheless, he determined that he does not think he hears about all the great ideas teachers have because they are afraid of the position. Rene also spoke to how he thinks many teachers see the administrative position as a last resort and for those who were not good teachers. This inaccurate perception, in his case, places him in a position where he has to prove himself as a teacher and administrator. In articulating this distrust in his ability, Rene had a hypothetical conversation with these teachers. "You've known me for twenty years. Now that I have become an administrator, even though I was always the teacher side by side with you in the trenches, you think I am an idiot because I am an administrator." Amada, Cruz, and Rene all expressed frustrations with this assumption about administrators despite their efforts to redefine administrators thorough their own practice.

Most of the participants who were not yet administrators discussed the fear of not being ready to be in leadership positions. Val commented that she does not feel "100 percent ready." Sasha and Arnel also indicated that they were not knowledgeable enough to become administrators. Don advocated for still learning more before returning to an administrative position. Sasha verbalized her fear by saying, "I've just been really scared because you know that it's such a big responsibility and…I'm scared I am not going to do a good job." Most of these participants were at or within the ten-year mark of their career as educators and still remained very aware of the implications of the position and, to a certain extent, feared what it could bring.

In addition to fearing administrators, Arnel spoke to the fear of change. He went on to explain that dealing with teachers who may already do things in a particular fashion can prove challenging. Amada also agreed that much of her time is spent battling teachers who combat any change she mentions whether or not they were requirements. Amada and Arnel recognized how convincing staff members to even to consider an alternative can be an obstacle to any change in their school culture or practice.

Ego. Although only four participants specifically named ego, all alluded to the challenge of egotistical actions can have on any school improvements. Amada expressed that despite that fact that administrators do not know everything about their schools or education, she has met administrators who refuse to admit it. Rene has also witnessed this and does not understand it. He asserted that the smartest thing he can do is hire people who he identifies as smarter than him to get the job done. He asserted that it is about teamwork, and the stronger the team, the stronger their school. Many participants hinted

towards current power struggles on their campuses. Many also commented how egotistical practices can get in the way of honest discussions and practices.

Overworked. Each administrator discussed the tremendous amount of responsibilities they held. The reality of being overworked, in many ways, can interfere with applying any of the above characteristics in their leadership practices. Despite concentrated efforts to improve and focus on the humanity of their faculty and staff, their to do list gets in the way. Brisa noted:

> If you're not going to downtown, and you're not spending time with your family, and your not laughing with your friends, and you're not exercising, all these things that you love, it's very hard to be a decent human being 'cause you are too tired all the time, and you're only dealing with issues, not exciting and interesting things.

These concerns were somehow expressed with each participant. Those who did not share being overworked themselves shared being stressed and overworked at some time in their career or voiced commonly witnessing it with their colleagues.

Mandar Obedeciendo Conclusion

The characteristics identified here are those that many administrators can abstractly agree upon. However, actually instilling these practices into an administrator's everyday habits can prove more challenging in a system that seems to encourage the exact opposite. These practices, however, provide the foundation for changing school culture and, therefore, school leadership as more efficient and sustainable. The need for change has been presented repeatedly throughout this dissertation, and change does not

come easily. But as David determined, “There’s always going to be some shifts, some radical shifts, and sometimes that’s necessary.”

Theme Three: Caminando Preguntamos – As We Walk, We Ask Questions

The theme of *Caminando Preguntamos* for the purposes of this study encompasses the act of reflection and imagination. The reflective element refers to how administrators integrate reflection individually and as a collective on their own campuses or through practices they have witnessed. The imagination segment of this section discusses ideal practices that the administrator participants would create in schools where anything was possible.

Reflection

Many of the participants worked to incorporate reflection in their personal practices. However, before one could attain personal reflection, Phillip insisted that knowing oneself, as a leader is the first step. Rene indicated that “You have to have a clear definition of self” in order to be an administrator. Both Rene and Phillip revealed instances where they were verbally and personally attacked because of their decisions as administrators. They asserted that it was their self-awareness that centered them and allowed them to not take the attacks personally.

Val communicated that sometimes knowing a person’s background can help in better understanding them. However, she acknowledged that there are certain legal restrictions that can make such conversations a risk. Phillip commented on the value of having many lenses as a principal to be better equipped to deal with diverse students and staff. He commented that his various lenses have allowed him to evolve with the

changing times. Though necessary, Don noted how many limit themselves to the superficial realms of reflection because profound reflection can be exceedingly difficult.

Sage conveyed his desire to implement a systematic way to reflect daily or weekly. He proposed something ritualistic because life can get in the way. Don agreed and recommended reflection daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and yearly. Cruz proposed that monthly reflection was reasonable. Amada indicated that, for her, reflection is constant. She mentioned struggling with being present and being proud during culminating ceremonies because she is already thinking about the next graduation and how to improve. Rene declared that his reflection is immediate, so he is able to move on and improve quickly.

Reflection can offer truths about ones self, their growth, and motivations. Don recommended administrators reflecting and honestly identifying their commitment to their job and the community. Kay values her reflective practices because it provides her with "opportunities to grow." Don similarly reflects to establish places for growth and celebrate accomplishments. He continued by adding that to reflect "allows you to see and demand more from yourself as a person." Kay voiced her own reflective practices and need for healing from various forms of oppressions she has dealt with. Despite its value, Phillip declared that many administrators do not engage in reflection.

Collective reflection. The participants mentioned acts of personal reflection along with reflection as a collective. Cruz outlined reflective practices for all – administrators, faculty, staff, parents, and students. He continued by stating that these reflections would not only raise opportunities for improvement, but also praise successes. Cruz expressed the significance of addressing both for true reflection. Don conveyed that

goal setting and honesty with the state of accomplishing those goals could be vastly helpful. Phillip used times set up for reflection as basis for brainstorming for concrete methods of improvement.

Sasha, Sage, Mel, and Cruz agreed on survey reflections. This practice allows the faculty to submit information and do so anonymously if desired. In addition to surveys, Cruz communicated the value of reflective whole group discussions. He declared dividing reflection thematically was best. Sasha and Sage suggested participating in reflection during professional development. Kay and Don voiced the prominence of creating a safe space for honest reflection. Kay addressed the value of this because it could initiate "processes that create a culture where all people share responsibility in addressing the conditions that created harm for people." Most identified the last meeting of the year as the reflection meeting, but as Sasha, in disclosing her own practice, said, "It just happens all the time, I feel like it is constant reflection."

Reflection through conversations. Reflecting with others was valuable to many participants and doing so in different formats was key. However, as administrators, many found this challenging due to power relations and expectations. Many participants contributed to best reflection practices through small group or pair conversations. Mel and Sage stated that conversations like the interview conducted for this dissertation granted them huge opportunity to reflect in their practice.

Sage expressed that the reflection aspect of evaluations is so valuable to assist his teachers to reach their goals instead of forcing them to reach appointed goals. Amada shared how there is little purpose to mandating goals, for teachers rarely care to reach them. Like Sage, she suggested creating goals together. On the evaluation process, Cruz

spoke to reflections during evaluations. This was not a discussion between evaluator and evaluate, but instead were both practiced evaluating each other and were able to present goals for growth to each other in a reflective and honest conversation. Don agreed with the concept of co-evaluation. To further level the traditional relationships, he additionally suggested constantly asking for feedback. Phillip discussed the critical feedback he received saying he values it as a gift. Sasha and Amada noted that evaluations must not come from punitive motivations but instead founded in the desire for growth. To address this, Phillip asserted that reflective conversations should be first based on people's dreams. This practice can humanize and shift the perspective from a disciplinary one to a one based on care.

Throughout all these practices of reflection, students were also included. Participants voiced the significance for student reflection as a collective and individually. Cruz mentioned providing time in the day for students to participate in daily reflection. Don communicated that quarterly reflection helps students with goal setting and check in. Phillip practices student exit interviews at the end of each year. The students are asked to reflect on their time in the school, sharing moments of success and opportunity.

Imagination

The process of imagining what could be proved challenging for many administrators. Initially, the administrators stayed within the confines of what they knew from policies and mandates. With time, each participant experimented more and more. The following are imaginings of what a school inspired by Zapatista practices could look like.

Vision. Amada asserted that a successful administrator must have vision. This vision should additionally result in accessible goals at the end of each year. Sage considers how remarkable a collective vision could be. He connected this to school leadership. He asked, "How do you create a collective vision of school governance so that no matter who's in that position, if the trust is created and built at that school site, it wouldn't matter." This collective vision, Sage advised, can be created through a very intentional effort. Kay extended this when declaring that the vision should be share with the community. Rene discussed how when coming into a school, as an administrator, one has to recognize the school vision and see how one's personal vision fits in the school community's vision. He noted that sometimes he completes actions knowing it does not fit within his vision, but does so because it contributes to the school vision. If this vision was collective, it would be fluid and a new addition would not be a conflict, but supplemental. Val pictured a scenario where actual distributed leadership was practiced with a clear shared mission and vision and that practiced flexibility to adapt to the needs of the school. David added that a place where similar values existed could encourage seamless change and shifts for overall improvement of the school.

Autonomy. Phillip proposed a space where schools had more autonomy to listen to district concerns, assess relevance for their school, and share how they would address the root of the issue presented. Sage and Arnel agreed that all district policies did not always coincide with school culture. Instead of negotiating personal morals and ethics, Rene suggested options for alternatives. Phillip conveyed that such practices could express district trust in schools and educators, valuing their expertise.

Community. Val imagined an administrator who was actually "genuinely a leader in the community." David voiced the importance of community by stating:

> School can be something I do, but my community is something that I live. And if you consider the school as the center of the community, that's where the place is where everything has to grow from, now the culture that you establish in the school is one that mirrors that of the community.

This mirroring of community can be practiced in many ways. This connection of community and school is vital. Val contended that the idea is not to educate students and encourage them to leave; it is to keep them in the communities to improve it. She imagined education where communities are transformed and strengthened because of the students and school community relationships. These community relationships could better exist if parents and students had a voice and true space in school decisions.

Val continued by picturing administrators who were very aware of their own positionality. Before taking on the leadership role administrators would assess their own awareness and take the time to learn about different types of oppression and privilege and their effects. She expressed that the complexities of someone's background does not allow homogeneous groups; however, this will be a valuable step to better understanding staff, and more importantly students. Arnel imagined an American high school with parent involvement. In his experience, he witnessed the highest parent involvement when it was mandatory for students to graduate. Sasha and Val remarked that mandatory parent involvement is being practiced at their school. Arnel, Sasha, and Val indicated that including this as an accepted policy could assist in increasing parent involvement.

Mentorship. Sasha, Rene, David, and Arnel spoke to the possibility of systematic and true mentorship. This mentorship could pertain to administrators in their positions. Mentorship could also be in regards to teachers, where teachers are teaching assistants before they become teachers as Rene promoted. Particularly to a model where leadership rotates, Rene envisioned mentorship at every level especially for teachers who hope to rotate into a leadership position. This could help in the transition. Rene illustrated a scenario where principals mentor assistant principals, and assistant principals mentor teachers. He added that this constant rotation could disperse information so that not only one has answers but also the wealth of knowledge could be at every level because of the variety of experience on site. Sasha agreed and stated that mentorship would certainly exist in an ideal structure. David agreed that with rotation in leadership knowledge would be easily accessible and leadership could be cultivated so to continue the school culture.

Curriculum. Amada spoke to the value of providing space for teachers to work together during the workday to improve their practice. Sasha, Don, and Arnel agreed on the importance of planning and brainstorming time with their colleagues during the day. Don asserted that these spaces could create nontraditional acts of teaching and promoting growth within all members of a group alternative to the often-isolating practice of planning and teaching.

Most of the participants advocated for culturally responsive curriculum. Although mandated, Val envisioned a school where she could teach curriculum that involved social justice. She pictured a setting where social justice education would not be questioned or judged but encouraged. Rene recognized the possibility of the freedom to create curriculum and design how instruction is delivered. David encouraged providing a space

for students to explore their abilities and find their authentic self. He continued by stating that every class should be based on issues of the community further uniting schools and communities.

Caminando Preguntamos Challenges

Many expressed the challenges that come with the desire to instigate change. Most of the challenges are connected to the stagnancy of culture. Amada addressed dealing with teachers combating changes she categorizes as small. She struggled to imagine communities of teachers that would embrace so many changes to their understanding of education. In using his own school as an example, Cruz noted how the same director has essentially created an idle environment, and it has had lasting effects. David declared that these leadership practices discussed could agitate the foundation of whiteness that many schools are founded on. Moving away from that culture is laborious, but timely and necessary. Val commented that these alternative practices of education would seem almost impossible. She augmented that this, in general, seeks to totally redefine education and educational practices. However, Val advised that though many will deem it unthinkable and hopeless, it is necessary for our students and ourselves.

Caminando Preguntamos Conclusion

The theme of *Caminando Preguntamos* underscored the value of reflection and moved into the practice of imagining what could be. These participants worked to create spaces where Zapatista practices could provide foundation for the practices of a school. Both of these subthemes coincide with negating the automatic acceptance of what education should be. Instead of acquiescing to what already is, *Caminando Preguntamos*

works to see everything through the Zapatista lens looking for opportunities to focus education on the humanity of those who practice it and can benefit from it.

Conclusion

Chapters 5 and 6 told the stories of 24 participants and shared their strive for creating school practices consistent with Zapatista practices and principles. The Zapatista delegation and *encuentro* participants highlighted transferrable Zapatista specific practices for the foundation of leadership that can be further developed for secondary schools. The administrator participants pulled from the Zapatista practices and principles to find suitable and beneficial implementations in secondary schools. Both sets of participants contributed to drawing from their knowledge to construct school practices. In the final chapter, all of these ideas constructed a leadership model that would work to address the many burdens administrators currently face.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion – *Un Mundo Donde Quepan Muchos Mundos*

The colonial legacy normalized in education (Gonzalez & Shields, 2015) runs deep in the practices of many schools today. Our schools are not places of equal education (Taylor & Clark, 2009); instead, they are often places that perpetuate societal inequities (Gonzalez & Shields, 2015). Despite some progress, the residue of oppressive past policies and practices can still be felt and continue to be reflected in educational statistics (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2013). In many cases, these actions of oppression are carried out when educators defer to what is ordered rather than what they are trained to do (Militello et al., 2015). When individuals are socialized into oppressive institutions, they internalize and reinforce what they know (Bell, 2016). In structures of hierarchy, students and teachers learn their place (Sleeter & Stillman, 2013). Administrators can adopt the role of the oppressor because they are forced to carry out oppressive practices. As they are typically subordinates themselves to a ruling governing board or district, they have the unique distinction of also being the oppressor and the oppressed. Thus, this position can be dehumanizing and toilsome. In an endeavor to deny American schools as places of social control, mainstream and established practices in education must be reexamined.

The goal of this study was to find alternative practices of leadership for American high schools. More specifically, this study examined how Zapatista practices and principles can provide a foundation for more sustainable and efficient leadership incorporating rotation. Although reviewed to some extent in the literature, the dire state of our educational system was further exposed through most of the interviewees. At the

onset of the interview process, I predicted the Zapatista delegation and *encuentro* participants would express dissatisfaction in the state of this country and, in association, its educational system. I had not, however, anticipated so many desperate calls for change from educational leaders, my administrator participants.

In telling their stories, several anecdotes of a broken educational system reoccurred. Seasoned administrators, newer administrators, and even teachers who had only taken on some administrative duties confessed to feeling overworked and stressed. These confessions were from those who worked in institutions of higher education, in continuation schools, and high schools, in other words, at every level examined in this study. Most did feel overworked, resulting in a constant struggle to balance their personal and professional lives. Stress manifested itself in a multitude of ways. Participants divulged several stress induced medical conditions and some insinuated mental health diagnoses. Many also acknowledged limited time for self-care and healing habits previously exercised before taking on administrative duties. Isolation also proved arduous for many practicing administrators. Ineffective or ambiguous policies, limited resources, and absurd bureaucratic negotiations all created high stakes climates for administrators. In efforts to persevere, some administrators worked to compartmentalize their work from their life and others characterized being an administrator as "just a job." Teachers with their administrative credential all categorized the position as unsustainable. Of those who were administrators, many were hoping to change their position or expressed extreme dissatisfaction with their professional role. Even at the university level where rotation is implemented, Brisa commented that she only took the position for one year and a half because she knew it was a considerable weight to uphold.

Summary of the Study

This study focused on identifying: (a) what are key Zapatista transferrable cultural practices and principles that can be applied to secondary schools leadership; and (b) what are important elements of Zapatista leadership rotation practices that can be implemented for sustainable rotating leadership structure in secondary schools. The purpose of this constructivist grounded theory study was to propose a sustainable and efficient rotation for secondary schools by practicing key Zapatista practices and principles. The literature review offered a historical background on the Zapatistas and many of their practices and principles. Several educational leadership and management theories were presented to seek theoretical connections to practical actions in Zapatismo. Chapter 3 presented the context for the administrator, remaining consistent with many of the findings. Although the focus of this study is high school administrators, information about department chairs was researched, as they were the only found educational institution currently rotating its leaders. Unfortunately, the rotation of leaders does not eliminate the burdens that are often associated with an administrative positions, but it does restrict the consequences of the position by enforcing term limits. Through the literature, the researcher presumed Zapatista practice and principles were the missing piece to sustainable and efficient leadership rotation. The Zapatista delegation and *encuentro* participants highlighted several principles and practices that could be transferrable to American high schools. Those concepts were then presented to administrators who determined which were most applicable and necessary for effective and sustainable educational leadership. Together, the participants contributed a plethora of components for creating a rotating leadership model founded on highlighted Zapatista practices and principles.

Discussion

Three central themes emerged from the findings: *Servir Y No Servirse* – To Serve: Not Self-Serve*; Mandar Obedeciendo* – Lead by Obeying*;* and *Caminando Preguntamos* – As We Walk, We Ask Questions*.* Each theme participated in constructing a better understanding of Zapatista principles and practices applicable to school leadership.

Servir Y No Servirse – To Serve: Not Self-Serve

This literature and research indicated that the administrative position, as it stands, can be an immense task (Abu-Hussain & Essawi, 2014; Kaplan & Owings, 1999; Nir & Hameiri, 2015). Zapatista delegation and *encuentro* participants spoke extensively about the alternative Zapatistas governance practices. Some felt uncomfortable with even using the term leader because of all the negative connotations affiliated with that word. Zapatista methods of decision-making are from the ground up (Marcos, 2003), and this encouraged administrator participants to consider unique leadership practices from those they typically encountered. These participants discussed distributed leadership and rotating leadership as alternate forms of leadership in their schools, identifying the advantages and disadvantages of each. Although there was initial hesitation in reconfiguring traditional leadership models, most of the participants identified elements for distributed and rotating leadership they already felt were successfully practiced in their own school while also recognizing opportunities for improvement.

The significance of community engagement in the Zapatista uprising and their contemporary governing practices cannot be overstated. Many of the Zapatista delegation and *encuentro* participants shared various instances of witnessed community involvement. Zapatista communities are involved at various levels of communal

governance (Barmeyer, 2009). These practices provided the base for enhancing and expanding community engagement in schools as linked to school leadership. The value of community engagement corresponds with the understanding that principals require a supportive staff, parents, and community members to enact viable change (Brown & Evans, 2017). Hence, administrator participants provided diverse instances for each facet of the school community involvement and for their perspective to be authentically represented and respectfully collected. This included incorporating more community presence on campus and also building community within the school. Community engagement incorporated consideration and participation of the collective in regards to the school decision-making process. Overall, the participants also emphasized balance and health so to ensure high quality work is not yoked in toxic work environments.

Mandar Obedeciendo – Lead by Obeying

Mandar Obedeciendo worked to further redefine the school leader. This theme integrated distinctive leadership qualities as deemed vital by participants. Firstly, the Zapatista delegation and *encuentro* participants shared Zapatista cultural and leadership characteristics they witnessed. They discussed how these characteristics contributed to the overall structure and movement of governing. These characteristics were then presented to administrators where they were asked to assess the value of the characteristic and its possible effects in educational leadership. The administrators expressed that leaders should be adaptable, caring, trusting, and trustworthy. They should lead with humility and be sincere listeners. Examples of each of these characteristics were explored. The participants provided concrete examples of instances where they had participated in or witnessed actions from school leaders embodying these characteristics.

The participants repeated the clear value of people centered practitioners (Spillane & Hunt, 2010) at the leadership level but also focused on how school culture, as a whole, should focus more on the humanity of people.

Caminando Preguntamos – As We Walk, We Ask Questions

The reflection element of Zapatista practices was repeated, in some way, by every Zapatista delegation and *encuentro* participant. The reflection they often discussed was a practice that progressed slowly and almost existed outside of time. This process occurred even within time sensitive circumstances. Yet, their process of verifying that all members of their communities were able to express their opinions in some forum was prioritized and resulted in thoughtful decision-making. The act of reflection is vital for school leaders (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2013). Although this same process could not exist in an American high school, the act of reflection should be ingrained throughout several school leadership practices and expectations. Administrators spoke to how reflection was not only necessary, but required a methodical system motivating and reminding administrators to reflect. Several participants made note to identify time limitations as a concrete challenge for constant reflection. Nonetheless, participants discussed reflection for all members of the school community.

The administrators embarked on a process of imagining a utopic school where administrators could feel supported and capable of balancing their responsibilities. Several experimented with having a collective vision and goals. Many wondered about autonomy and its definition in American school settings. Various participants also considered how mentorship could have and could continue to aid in developing them as

administrators. Administrators also spoke to how they could spend time on curricula and engaging school, teacher, and student growth.

Many of these themes are, to some degree, being practiced in schools nationwide. However, they are often only miniscule indications of the potential. Elements of these Zapatista practices and principles in schools are not typically fully practiced due to concrete restrictions, often financial or bureaucratic. For many participants, the possibility of what could be was almost too much even consider. Several participants from both groups struggled to disentangle themselves from their stifled and despondent perceptions of American education. When discussing the possibility of school reform, many of these participants demonstrated reluctance. Few confessed extreme change was, in their perspective, impossible. Many expressed intense doubts that change was within reach, overwhelmed by the pestilential and oppressive American political system.

Summary of Conclusion

The educational system, as we know it, is not working to its maximum ability. Not only do our schools reproduce and promote systems of hierarchy (Apple, 1999), they also produce, reproduce, and maintain oppression (Adams & Zuniga, 2016). When contemplating our current educational system, one must consider how it has been maintained and who benefits from it (Apple, 1999). Administrators clearly are not benefiting from the current system. Freire (1970/2009) contends that the alienation of the oppressed results in their attempt to imitate the oppressor. This can be on account of being cloaked in authoritarian, discriminatory, and the dominant ideology (Freire, 1994). The actions of many administrators can remain within these ideologies despite initial

intentions of enacting positive educational change. These internalizations can create the inaccurate notion that change is not impossible (Bell, 2016).

The educational practices and structures examined in this study were in an effort to embrace education as a practice of freedom (hooks, 1994). However considering the seemingly insurmountable task of explaining how one might get from here to there, an alternative is to create a different system altogether (Mehta, 2013). To a certain degree, this study recommends an overhaul of the educational system. The fact that this overhaul may be unlikely or effect minimal change is not reason enough to exclude it completely from consideration (Renfro & Morrison, 1983).

Rotating Leadership Model

When the administrator participants shared their reasoning for becoming an administrator, all were intentions of service. Many of those who obtained their administrative credential also shared efforts to help and improve their educational setting. However, many of the administrators' current positions did not allow their intentions to be realized. Despite the opinion that school principals should be the central figures in their school and, therefore, the education system (Abu Hussain & Essawi, 2014), this study advises the principal should be one element of a collective leadership. Raelin (2012) considers a cooperative leadership practice. As many new principals anticipate staying in their position for five to ten years (Shoho & Barnett, 2010), sustainability should be an essential objective (Stukalina, 2010). This study does not expect to find one all encompassing solution to improve education. Instead, the hope is to begin to discover and explore conceptual and economic alternatives that involve and address present complexities (Apple, 1999).

There are various models of leadership (Leonard & Leonard, 1999). Yet, many seek to merely reform, when transformation is essential (Deal, 1990). New structures integrating others into activity are needed (Boylan, 2016). And, as existing institutions have not yet been able to transform adequately, (Mehta, 2013) this study challenges them to do so. This study presents a type of leadership model that strives for an organization to confront challenges and seeks opportunities through a collective intelligence.

As previously discussed, the Zapatistas are by no mean a perfect society devoid of problems. They regularly disclose their own struggles and efforts to grow. However, their practices provide a great foundation for a sustainable and efficient leadership practice in secondary schools. The list of failures within current leadership models has been bruited about by those within and outside of education. Educational leadership requires bold strokes and a refusal of failed conventions to better satisfy the needs of administrators aiding in continuous progress and sustainability. However, a simple reversal of roles will not suffice (Freire, 2009). Typically, leaders who acquire power venture to sustain or increase it (Raelin, 2005). Rotation can address these power struggles and can minimize the consequences of holding an administrative position. However, rotation alone will not create an efficient and sustainable school leadership practice. Instead, rotation coupled with Zapatista practices can provide for a fluid educational leadership structure that satisfies the needs of all those in the school community, focused on their humanity.

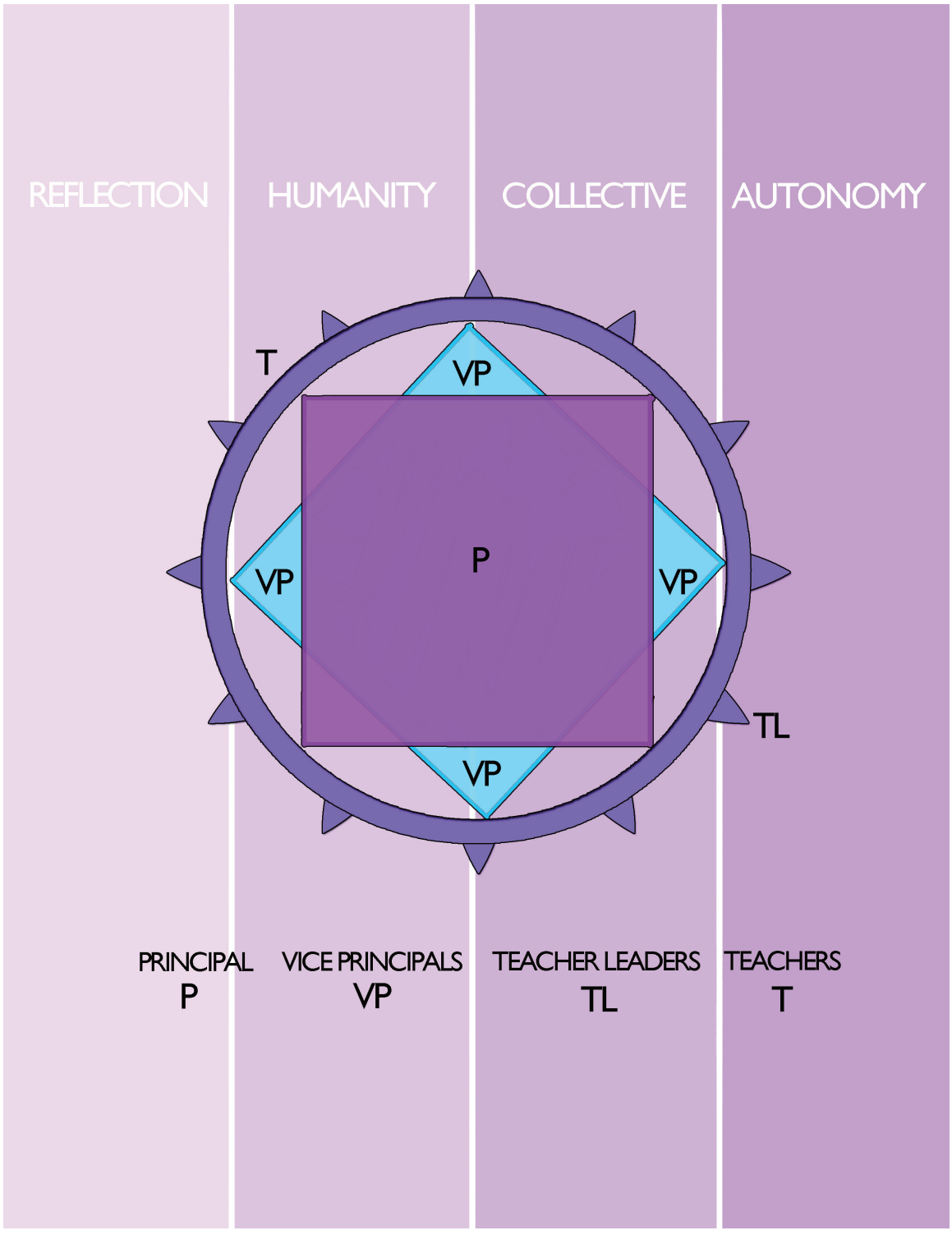

Figure 1. Rotating Leadership Model.

Figure 1 represents a visual of how the Rotating Leadership Model is designed to create systemic rotation of school leadership within the presence of an autonomous, collaborative, humanitarian, and reflective school culture. At the center of this model is the principal with four assistant principals within close range. The assistant principals share in the duties of the principal, and these duties can additionally rotate based on abilities and interests. Within this organizational structure are the coordinators and teacher leaders. This model is relatively similar to many already existing structures many participants spoke about. The key difference is the rotating aspect among the leadership. The circular representation indicates the possible movement from position to position, signifying a more symbiotic leadership practice.

The rotation can occur from teacher leader, to coordinator, to administrator, to principal. The principal then would rotate back into the classroom. However, as more people rotate into various positions, I assume people can rotate in a less linear fashion. Three-year term limits could instigate appropriate change without leadership stagnancy. These years would entail being mentored by a previous principal for a transitional period along with transitioning the next principal. The assistant principal term could range from one to two years, with the option to rotate into the principal's position, or to a coordinator, or teacher position. However, if these positions are only rotated, they will surely create similar environments as those in higher education institutions. Therefore, Zapatista practices and principles that emerged from the data are key characteristics in an effective Rotating Leadership Model. The following are the conditions for sustainable and efficient rotating leadership.

Autonomy

The idea of autonomy in this instance is not precisely like the autonomy the Zapatistas experience. Such specific notions of autonomy are not feasible if one wants to encourage students to continue on to higher education and be able to interact with the larger structures in an American capitalistic system. Instead, this autonomy speaks to one that resides outside of what one of Armstrong's (2012) participants identified as a system that set him up for failure. These controlling entities are ones that many principals spend much time satisfying, rather than pertaining to student achievement (Onorato, 2013). The autonomy essential for successful rotating leadership does not disregard all bodies of authority; alternatively, it should be practiced within the boundaries of the school (Cheng & Cheung, 2003). It can be achieved through constant communications between larger institutions and smaller individual agents (Ali, 2016). Some participants mentioned the ideal space to grant such practices could be at a pilot or private school.

Additional necessary practices of autonomy should be practiced at various levels in the school community. As an administrator, one should create spaces to maximize the empowerment of their faculty and staff. Team members should be encouraged to lead themselves for optimal knowledge creation and innovation (Bligh et al., 2006). Such empowerment can lead to team ownership and incentive (McArthur, 2002). This space includes making decisions, defining problems, solving problems, and recognizing opportunities and challenges (Bligh et al., 2006). Similar to Social Justice Leadership, the notions of proactively and self-sustaining practices are also relevant (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014). However, the school collective will have to decide on how to exercise responsible autonomy as a network (Ali, 2016). As with Leaderful Leadership,

knowledge will not exist exclusively at the top of hierarchical pyramid (Raelin, 2014). The Rotating Leadership Model will spread information among several individuals because many will have expanded their knowledge base because of their participation in the rotation. It is through these underpinnings of autonomy that most of the aspects of Rotating Leadership Model can exist.

Collective

As social justice practices include both the advantaged and disadvantaged to create change (Bell, 2016), teachers should not only be involved in one singular process of leadership, but be included throughout the governing practices (Cheng & Cheung, 2003). As an alternative leadership practice, Rotating Leadership will be based on a school collective. The ideals of distributed leadership and participatory democracy are interwoven throughout the concept of the school collective. In order for the Rotating Leadership Model to work, one person alone cannot carry the burden of school leadership. Instead, many contribute and assume some roles and responsibilities. Social justice places much value on collaboration (Charmaz, 2011), and this is consistent with what is needed in the Rotating Leadership Model. The rotation of many team members allows for a wide knowledge base, creating a culture of leadership.

This can be accomplished through a school collective with various committees. The school collective will embody every member faculty and staff on campus. These members will convene to collaborate on one committee, as leadership is not the action of one, but many (Senthamil Raja & Palanichamy, 2011). These collectives can allow for everyone to have a say in many of the school decisions. This allows for a wider range of participants (Hall et al., 2013). Committees require collaborative cultures to succeed

(Andronico, 2017). Additionally such practices can look to Lateral leadership for enacting cooperation and communication within a flatter leadership structure (Kühl et al., 2005). The committees will be divided thematically or based on a particular project. The committees will each have a leader and will make decisions within their subject of focus.

Allowing the school collective to participate in leadership responsibilities and roles encourages a sense of ownership this is aided by transparency in leadership structures and job specifications (Cheng & Cheung, 2003). When decisions are made, they can be accepted and enacted more quickly, for many already offered their input (McArthur, 2002). The value of transparency not only of what decisions are made but also why they were made (Lazzari et al., 2009) is built into leadership practices that incorporate Rotating Leadership model. This method is non-authoritarian and accents self-regulation and reasonableness (Livington, Excell, & Murris, 2011). Revolutionary leaders identify the significance of people working together in solidarity and who value people (Freire, 1970/2009). Through school collectives, the divide often taking place between administrator and teacher will dissipate as all school staff and faculty will be, in some capacity, a school leader.

Humanity

To lead with humanity means to honor each person's humanity. The oppressive structures of traditional educational systems are dehumanizing (Freire, 1992; Freire, 1970/2009). The struggle against dehumanization and in pursuit of one's full humanity is procured through solidarity and fellowship (Freire, 1970/2009). In addition, the importance of equity includes service, humanity, and love (Chatmon & Watson, 2018) and must be at the foundation of the practices in Rotating Leadership along with trust.

Trust is needed to share leadership (Raelin, 2005). And, trust is required to instigate any change (Brown & Evans, 2017). Focusing on one's humanity can, like Transformative leadership, motivate leaders to work within their position to disassemble oppressive practices.

Nurturing mutual respect is a simple concept many participants identified absent in their professional relationships. Transformational Leadership conveys the value of relationships (Robinson et al., 2008), similarly Rotating Leadership cannot exist without meaningful and long-lasting relationships (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014). These relationships must work together with purpose and integrity (Chatmon & Watson, 2018). These practices replace fear with safety while still promoting best efforts (Foster & Wiseman, 2015). As many of the participants noted, leadership traits included being a good listener, humble, trusting, caring, and adaptable. All of these traits can reside in the practices of honoring people's humanity.

Reflection

Honest reflection encourages the habit of growth. Constant learning and growing creates optimum organization efficiency (Huang, Rode, & Schroedar, 2011). Leaders who are most effective perpetually revisit and adjust their own practices and goals (Bass, 2017). Faircloth and Tippeconnic (2013) advise all practitioners to reflect on how leadership is conceptualized and practiced. This practice must not stop with reflection, but continue on to critical thinking and action. Critical thinking in many ways is connected to reflection. The critical thinking encouraged through reflection has been categorized as a threat to authority (hooks, 1994). But, the restless questioning of curiosity exposes the hidden (Freire, 1998).

Through reflection, one can dream about the possibilities of practice. This creates the landscape of hope, transfiguring the dreams into necessities (Freire, 1970/2009). Through reflection transformation can happen eventually reaching liberation (Freire, 1970/2009). Reflective practices are necessary for Rotating Leadership. This practice must be individual and collective. It must be practiced at all level in the school community. The reflection must additionally extend to critical thinking and to actions for improvement. The process must be constant with pathways to improve practice. This grounded theory study engaged in an excavation of theory from the raw data collected (Walker & Myrick, 2006). The data constructed the model of Rotated Leadership.

Implications for Practice

This study does not assume that every school will improve by implementing this particular model. However, there are practices derived from this study that all leadership models could incorporate into already existing structures. The Zapatista principles and practices are a concrete starting point for reflecting on the status of one's current school environment and envisioning the possible. The educational system will not be demolished. There are many who are working within the limitations of their school policies to create amazing and positive impact. The administrator participants in this study are such examples. Mel reported how she increased course completion at her school and encouraged teachers to step outside their comfort zone and district policies to promote student learning. Rene revealed how he recently was able to revitalize a department on campus with a grant he wrote. Sage proudly shared how one of his teachers motivated his class to hold a press conference on gun violence, sharing their views and demands for change. Phillip shared how, this year, he was able to work with

recently deported students through online classes so they could still obtain their high school diploma. Each administrator and teacher with their administrative credentials showed positive and extraordinary efforts to improve student education and well-being. These individual practices started because one person looked for an opportunity to instigate a small change. The implications for practice are for all practitioners to imagine their educational utopia and then take thoughtful and small steps toward it.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study is but one small piece of a body of research. Future study could surround the practices and principles of the Zapatistas and how they can be integrated into other facets of the school structure. Individuals could research schools and experiences in Zapatista communities and relate them to our own educational practices. Rotating Leadership could be taken from a conceptualized model to a concrete one, identifying all of its strengths and weaknesses. Ultimately, this research hopes to continue the discussion on how to concretely better our educational systems. I recommend all educators reflect and consider the possible, allowing reverie, interrupted only by concrete planning and action. Whether in study or practice, these are but a few possibilities this research could initiate.

Reflections and Concluding Thoughts

When first asking about how Zapatista practices may be implemented into American high schools, silence overpowered many participants. Some expressed sadness profoundly believing Zapatista-inspired practices could ever exist within educational institutions. Many administrator participants were also hesitant to verbalize, and therefore hope for, any concrete transformation to the education system, feeling it was nearly

impossible. These initial reactions spoke to the shadows oppression can cast over even the most progressive of school leaders. This study hoped to seek a better alternative for administrators who slip through the cracks of an oppressive structure that can incessantly scrapes away at their initial aspirations and well being.

Freire (1994) calls on progressive educators to study groups who have resisted oppressive structures in an effort to learn lessons and apply them to our own context. Bell (2016) insists that learning from other movements can provoke an alternative reality. There are lessons all around us, but it is up to us to act, but "What is essential is the wanting and the seeking." (Lynd & Grubacic, 2008, p. 241). However, we cannot reach freedom without disrupting the status quo (Freire, 2009) and passivity has never been a true option. The Zapatistas sought freedom and have taken the time to, brick by brick, construct a reality they felt proud to create and own.

A Rotating Leadership Model founded on Zapatista practices and principles is one more step toward a liberated educational system. This is not the last and final solution, for next is a period of experimentation, advancing slowly and carefully. This will prove difficult for many, for it works to alter the equilibrium of oppressive school culture. Change can come through excruciatingly slow increments; such actions will take courageous agents of change. The Zapatistas had to seize a new form of governance for their survival. We cannot wait for more irrevocable destitution before we enact change. We cannot be placated by fear or allow the sacrifices of many educational leaders to be in vain, but instead evade the oppressive forces that hold dominion over us. We must proceed as if we are unafraid, striving towards a larger goal. Starring into the void of the future can be overwhelming, but we must hold on to the type of education we long to see.

We are past patiently waiting (Miranda, 2016) and, instead, must renounce the educational mayhem and assault we have endured for far too long.

Our school system is bounded in oppression. Many students are currently mis-educated or under-educated. Many school teachers and leaders work in seemingly inexhaustible systems that overwork and under appreciate. Yet, we are the only ones who can lighten this burden. Each of us must rise, pushing past this moment, inspiring a movement of educational leadership reform. With that comes a decision for each of us, where we move past the realm of submissive deniability and into an ardent and impermeable collective of small but impactful steps nearing our utopic school imaginings. For what we create now, is part of the history of education reaching for a legacy beyond our realities.

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