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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from  
*Collective Equity*, by Sonja Hollins-Alexander and  
Nicole Law.

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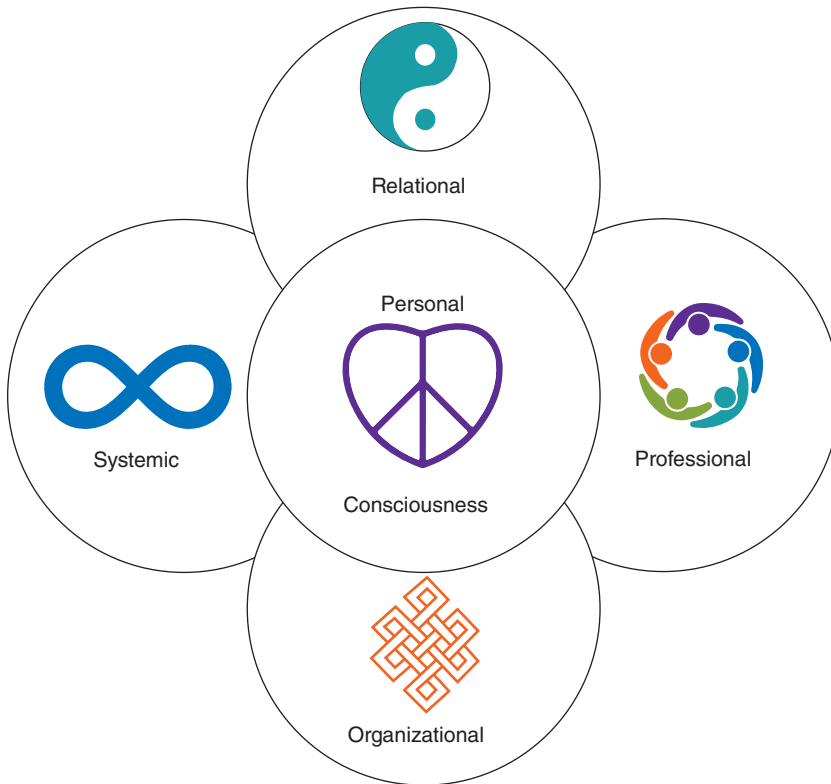
Much of what we have experienced as “school reform” has been based on a top-down model, driven by accountability and compliance and informed by the societal/structural level. Howard (2015) refers to such carrot-and-stick efforts as “market-driven,” in direct contrast to the collectivist ways of being that are at the heart of this book. After enduring decades of such policies and practices one thing remains clear: we’ve done little to close the opportunity gaps that have created barriers to the success of historically marginalized groups, including students of color and those living in low-income households.

Rather than a top-down model in which our actions and decisions are driven by the outer ring of the circle in Figure 1.4, we propose that the levels of engagement are interdependent, thereby creating the Collective Equity Framework (Figure 1.5). Moreover, the evolution of the collective begins with personal consciousness—the inner circle. If we do not have an understanding of our own culture and how it informs our beliefs and values, we are not equipped to evolve with others in our professional practice in a manner that creates equitable learning experiences. We must collectively agree to value preservation of identity, honor differences, and honor individual assets. This is not antithetical to coming together as a collective. Rather than thinking of the collective as a melting pot, think back to our quilt metaphor in which each square maintains its own uniqueness and beauty, but together they form a unified work of artistry. Coming together as a collective is a relational process of respecting, honoring, and learning from one another using a lens of difference. Again, what makes it a collective is that we catalyze around the greater good. Changing systems requires changing people, and changing people requires changing systems (Fullan, 2009). In contrast to the top-down model, our enabling conditions move from the inside out, requiring *collective engagement* among everyone in the organization. As we gain new self-understanding and engage with one another in the collective, we gain greater insight into how our actions and decisions influence not only our professional practice but our organizations and society as a whole.

### **Equity Pathways and Equity Pavers**

When we come together as learners, we become more adept at identifying how our decisions and actions can be pathways or barriers to equity. An *equity pathway* is a roadmap for equitable transformations that addresses educational disparities. It is a process

**FIGURE 1.5** The Collective Equity Framework



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for acquiring knowledge, building skills, shaping attitudes, and strengthening stamina for collective actions to diminish inequities in our learning community. Below are examples of equity pathways that address specific inequities in our schools:

- Creating culturally fortifying environments
- Cultivating anti-racist education
- Building cultural literacy of learning community members
- Enhancing equity partnerships with families and community members
- Designing culturally relevant instruction
- Fostering equitable and inclusive working environments

As we travel toward equitable transformations, we strive to identify and validate where people are on the journey. Transforming schools into equitable environments can only be achieved if the members of the learning community increase their equity knowledge, attitudes, and skills. This is accomplished using techniques we call *equity pavers*. An equity paver is a scaffold, or step along our equity pathway, that helps us identify the prior knowledge, attitudes, and skills of the learning community. It also describes concrete action steps that we can take to realize our desired outcomes as defined by our pathways. Equity pavers provide entry points that leverage prior knowledge and determine a logical sequence for *creating communities where we all can breathe*.

An equity paver is directly aligned to the specified equity pathway. Pavers help us observe our own growth and monitor our progress toward cultural humility. For example, if your equity pathway is to culturally fortify all the students in the learning community, then your equity pavers (the actions the collective will take) could include the following:

**Equity Pathway:** Create a culturally fortifying environment

**Equity Pavers:**

- Book study: *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* by Zaretta Hammond
- Professional learning on culturally fortifying practices
- Coaching on the implementation of culturally fortifying instructional practices
- Build a culturally fortifying school and classroom library
- Conduct an equity audit
- Engage all staff in DOT inventory (a process used to ensure that every student is known in the learning community. Students names are posted around the room and teachers place dots on names of students where they have a significant relationship. This provides a visualization to making sure every student is known)
- Create a culturally relevant welcome center for families and community members

- Regularly monitor the experiences of the adult members of our learning community (e.g., do we all feel safe in speaking our respective truths?)
- Obtain student feedback on our culturally fortifying practices. How are we actually doing?

The identification of equity pathways and equity pavers provides opportunities to give birth to collective actions for creating equitable learning environments for all. Figure 1.6 illustrates how equity pavers align with the Collective Equity Framework.

**FIGURE 1.6 Examples of Equity Pavers Within the Dimensions of the Collective Equity Framework**

DIMENSION OF THE COLLECTIVE EQUITY FRAMEWORK	EQUITY PAVERS
<b>Personal</b>	Collective engagement strategies focusing on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• dimensions of identity</li> <li>• bias recognition</li> <li>• levels of culture</li> </ul>
<b>Relational</b>	Collective engagement strategies focusing on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• social fusion activities that create cultural interconnectedness</li> <li>• generosity and kindness toward others</li> <li>• interactions displaying humility</li> </ul>
<b>Professional</b>	Professional learning opportunities focusing on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• culturally fortifying pedagogy</li> <li>• culturally sustaining leadership</li> <li>• agentic vs. communal dispositions</li> </ul>
<b>Organizational</b>	Continuous school improvement actions focusing on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• system/school equity data</li> <li>• human development and empowerment</li> <li>• equitable strategic resourcing</li> </ul>
<b>Systemic</b>	Sociopolitical actions focusing on the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• systemic inequities impacting schools</li> <li>• white supremacy and public education</li> <li>• criminalization of students and discipline policies</li> </ul>