

TOWARD A THEORY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE PRACTICE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

ADMINISTRATORS

By

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Social justice is a significant core value in higher education and foundational to practices designed to remove barriers to collegiate study and prepare students to function in a more diverse society. Higher education administrators are responsible for facilitating democratic access to education, yet the implementation of social justice practice to provide this opportunity of knowledge is traditionally left to the idiosyncratic experience of individuals. University mission statements often present social justice aspirations in theoretical terms (Hyttén & Bettez, 2011), which make consistent implementation of social justice practices problematic without a research-based model of best practices. Existing research on social justice in the higher education realm focuses primarily on K-12 teacher development programs (Bondy, Hambacher, Murphy, Wolkenhauser & Krell, 2015) and no research results are posted in the *What Works Clearing House* (Institute of Education Sciences, 2015) to address social justice practice within post-secondary education. This qualitative study collected data to provide a knowledge base for higher education administrators of how social justice practice was interpreted and executed in various university settings. The purpose of this study is to inform the development of a holistic model of practice standards necessary to meet the present-day demands (Northern State memo, 2015) of administrators charged with delivering a university's social justice mission.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my fellow higher education administrators, quiet social justice soldiers, so many of whom I get to call colleagues and friends.

“If humanity has made some headway in realizing that the ultimate value of every institution is its distinctively human effect—its effect upon conscious experience—we may well believe that this lesson has been learned largely through dealings with the young.”

— John Dewey

Democracy and Education: An Introduction to the
Philosophy of Education (1916)

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In conclusion (emphasis added), to my family, truly the most important cog in this wheel of dissertation production. The pride shared from my parents and in-laws, and unwavering encouragement of my children, Matt and Megan, reminded me to believe in myself during this five-year journey. And to my loving husband Ralph, whose tireless assistance of hot tea, managing our life, and serving us homemade chef’s meals, kept me focused on the task at hand. Thank you for sharing in this triumph with me – now let’s go camping!

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction & Problem Statement

The necessity of social justice as a pillar within a university's mission is undisputed, yet the practice of social justice is not well defined for administrators in higher education. The purpose of this research study is to address this need by examining the context of the social justice practices used by higher education administrators at the nation's most diverse college campus (US News & World Report, 2012). This qualitative study will provide data that may contribute to a social justice training model for higher education administrators, who traditionally get very little professional development in social justice practice.

The components of social justice are commonly expressed in core ideas of equity, democracy, community, and caring (Dewey, 1916/2007; Freire, 1970/2009; Greene, 1988; Martin, 1994; Noddings, 1984). Caring, compassion, and concern for others are foundational elements in any environment where the community is learning to live together and respect each other to share learned meanings (Greene, 1988). As Noddings (1984) writes, "The primary aim of every educational institution and of every educational effort must be the maintenance and enhancement of caring" (p.172). For Paulo Freire (1970/2009), democracy, social justice, and a liberating education dialogue is critical to communication across differences. "Equality. Social Justice. Democracy," according to Garcia (2005), "these are the words that define this country's promise to its citizens...through education." He frames the promise for educators to "Provide the opportunity for knowledgeable people to build a nation of equality." Since their founding, American colleges and universities have embraced the responsibility for shaping the development of students into better citizens and building democracy. Therefore, it is essential for

higher education administrators to instantiate tenets of social justice in their practice in order to develop an educative, equitable, democratic, and caring structure for higher education communities. This study will provide a research base for identifying the components of social justice practice to help administrators create and re-create the conditions and contexts necessary for a socially just university community within their own spheres of conduct.

Abundant research exists focusing on equity and affirmative action (Aguirre Jr. & Martinez, 2006; Rizvi & Lingard, 2011; Schultz, 2010). Many studies also exist on developing K-12 educators' awareness of social justice tenets such as race, gender, and ethnic inclusiveness (Hatcher, 2011). However, researchers note that there is little evidence on how the sphere of social justice is being enacted in higher education institutions (Brennan, 2008; Hatcher, 2011). Though social justice is embedded in the mission of most institutions, and thus is a responsibility of administrators who are accountable for implementation of social justice programs and policies, the research on social justice practice exists primarily in the K-12 teacher preparation and professional development programs. When social justice is studied in the context of higher education, the research is not focused on practices of higher education administrators. Instead, social justice related topics include research tied to teacher development programs (Bondy, Hambacher, Murphy, Wolkenhauser & Krell, 2015) and collaboration across disciplines to shape teaching beliefs (Ness, George, Turner & Bolgatz, 2010). Even the *What Works Clearing House* (Institute of Education Sciences, 2015) produces no results when queried on social justice in its post-secondary section. Based on the limited amount of existing research on social justice practice within higher education specifically, this study proposes to contribute to the development of professional standards of social justice practice beyond the traditional reliance on idiosyncratic experience.

Study Purpose & Significance

Social justice is a significant core value in higher education and foundational to practices designed to remove barriers to collegiate study and prepare students to function in a more diverse society. The literature on social justice practices in K-12 education provides insight and guidelines (Hatcher, 2011), but is not specific to the higher education community. Without a research-based model of best practices in higher education, social justice outcomes are often left to the personal interpretation and discretion of individual administrators.

In addition, university mission statements are typically written in theoretical terms, thus higher education administrators often struggle with enacting social justice when they attempt to translate theoretical mission into concrete practice (Hyttén & Bettez, 2011). Higher education administrators are responsible for facilitating democratic access to education and mediating issues of inequality based on race, gender, or class (Schultz, 2010) through the creation of programming and policies that benefit a wide audience of both majority and minority interests and populations by infusing diverse experiences into the academic culture (Aguirre Jr. & Martinez, 2006). Yet, there is very little research literature or models of best practice to guide social justice practice for higher education administrators. Thus, although “almost everyone in education seems to share at least a rhetorical commitment to social justice, especially as we routinely express the belief that schools should help to provide equality of opportunity” (Hyttén & Bettez, 2011, p.9), defining and assessing social justice practice remains elusive. This research intends to address this gap in the research literature by studying the processes and contexts used by higher education administrators for social justice practice, and using this information for the development of professional benchmarks for higher education administrators who are responsible for enacting an institutional mission of social justice.

Research Question

The primary research question of this study is: How are higher education administrators enacting social justice practices? This question was pursued through a set of semi-structured interviews with higher education leaders at a large, urban, northeast, public, research university. In order to gather data on the social justice practices, the study participants were asked questions in hopes of identifying thematic areas of practice. Secondary research questions were developed to expose the layers of process and context that higher education administrators utilized to enact social justice practice. Those secondary questions emerged from identification of what conditions and context were necessary to enact social justice practices. The protocol engaged participants in questions about their practices and how they framed social justice personally. Subsequent questions tethered the foundational elements of social justice to professional practice impact areas that emerged during data collection to further examine the context and catalysts of practice.

The goal of this study was to determine whether social justice practices could be collected for the purpose of developing a model that could inform higher education administrators' social justice practices. This study also gathered data on how institutional support for social justice programs impacted their practice choices, what context these practices required, how social justice was evident in their work, and how collaboration played a role in completing a social justice mission. Because there are no practice or professional standards by which to measure or report on social justice practice, this study provides data on how administrators interpret and execute practices in various university settings. By focusing on higher education administrators at a variety of academic and administrative units, I hope to inform the practice of those who lead social justice missions towards a more democratic and caring campus

environment. The data collected on the context and process of enacting social justice will provide a knowledge base for higher education administrators that could frame a model of standards top-level leadership and stakeholders to meet social justice missions.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In my review of literature relevant to higher education administration's role in promoting and delivering social justice, I determined that the literature on the specific topic of 'social justice practice' is scarce, so I have surveyed related topics that contributed to this study's purpose of identifying how social justice practices are enacted by higher education administrators. The foundation for social justice includes political, economic, and other human rights symbolizing the concepts of fairness and non-discrimination (Bruner, 2008). In reviewing two key topics: a) social justice components, and b) higher education leadership context, it is apparent that despite these key topics having a significant amount of research published, a minimal amount is specific to higher education administrators, and even less is focused on how practices are implemented.

Social justice, in its varied terms, is researched across many disciplines that relate indirectly to the social justice practice of higher education administrators. Many studies focus on education preparation programs, and how teachers and administrators in K-12 settings should face social justice concerns (Marshall, 2004; McKenzie, Christman, Hernandez, Fierro, Capper, Dantley & Scheurich, 2008; Moran, 2007). Research focused on the components of social justice often frames it in the context of K-12 environments (Glanz, 2010; Hytten & Bettez, 2011). Even when social justice is set in the higher education context, research often omits the execution of practice, focusing instead on a broader theoretical stance on collaboration and community, but leaving out the context and practice examples that would allow for replication of best practices in programming (Ribbins & Gunter, 2002; Tharp, 2012; Torres-Harding, Siers, & Olson, 2012). Therefore, this literature review introduces the components of social justice in the realm of

education, and focuses on leadership in the context of higher education, in order to further define the gap in practice that this study hopes to fill.

Components of Social Justice

The context of how social justice is presented in research emphasizes Dewey's democratic conception of education aligning "scholar-practitioner values of democracy, social justice, caring, and equity" (Schultz, 2010). Terms used to describe the components of social justice vary in the literature yet are crucial to understanding and interpreting life experiences of constituents served by higher education administrators. Tharp (2012) suggests that we incorporate social justice language into foundational statements, and into assessment and evaluation in addition to providing training. Terms such as equitable allocation, fairness and equity in resources, multicultural and multiracial democracy, and an ethic of caring (Glanz, 2010; Marshall, 2004; Noddings, 1984; Torres-Harding et al., 2012) are prevalent in research utilizing the ever-broadening definition of social justice.

The term 'diversity' is often comingled with 'social justice' and both components are considered catalysts to produce change towards a more inclusive community. Researching social justice is a monumental task considering the numerous definitions of diversity on college campuses (Williams & Clowney, 2007). An understanding of the different issues linked together within the same theme of social equity in higher education is vital for intra-institutional issues (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008). When asked to define their work in diversity, faculty often answered with terms such as "equity, tolerance, antiracist, and focus on differences" (Brown-Glaude, 2009, p. 219-220). The premise of diversity has translated to the undergraduate realm and is now seen as a worthwhile and nearly required responsibility of institutions across the globe (Aguirre Jr. & Martinez, 2006).

Schultz (2010) cites ‘community’ as one of the core values to his scholarly-practitioner’s philosophy of leadership, and it is also a foundational tenet of social justice. Although Schultz writes in the context of K-12 schools, his reference to the democratic conception of education emphasizes shared experience as the underpinning for creating an environment of values such as caring, social justice, and equity. “School [is] a form of community life” according to John Dewey (1897), and while he was referencing mass education at the grade school level, the statement is applicable to today’s higher education campus communities.

The themes throughout the discussions of leadership in varying research contexts repeat the critical need for social justice to play a prominent role in leadership education, in developing an institutional level of caring, in cultural orientation towards citizenship, and in linkage to diversity efforts in academe (Rodriguez, Chambers, Gonzalez, & Scheurich, 2010; Rost & Barker, 2000; Schultz, 2010; Williams & Clowney, 2007). Likewise, higher education practitioners of social justice are being called on to provide “equitable access to resources and protection of human rights” (Torres-Harding et al., 2012, p.78). Therefore from a review of the many iterations of social justice in the education literature, the guiding typology in this study is rooted in caring, democracy, community building, and equity.

Higher Education Leadership

Leaders in higher education utilize the components of social justice to develop initiatives in response to societal change and to serve institutional missions of diversity. In order to implement change, leaders need to exist in a position within the context of the organization to enact positive transformation. Higher education leaders face a series of challenges such as globalization and new student demographics and need all the leadership capacity possible to affect change in the complex structure of higher education institutions (Kezar, 2012). It is

important to note that working across difference is a learned skill, and in the context of higher education, it is about building communities and cultivating talent; this is a multifaceted task and requires deep partnerships that recognize the complex identities of students (Cantor, 2013).

There may also be significant benefit to benchmarking social justice implementation practices across higher education partners to differentiate substance from superficiality (Doerfel & Ruben, 2002). Therefore it is imperative to provide leaders with the ability to replicate practice that builds communities with social justice competencies.

Higher education institutions also contribute immeasurably to the cultural fabric of their communities and the public invests in higher education as a conduit to mobility (Cantor, 2013; Ruben, 2010). Another critical element of social justice operationalization is collaboration, which is exemplified in the Excellence in Higher Education model emphasizing commitment to collaboration and community (Ruben, 2004). Social justice relies on a core principle of democracy that emulates John Dewey's provision for the value of community and equitable participation of all the members of its society (Schultz, 2010). This value is echoed in the research on leadership education, which emphasizes preparing participative citizens on moral ground for the common good (Rost & Barker, 2000).

The task of preparing citizens is a complex one to replicate in a practice model; institutions need to be cognizant of the public's perception of their diversity initiatives while "providing students with the valued knowledge required for meeting the challenges of living in a diverse society" (Aguirre Jr. & Martinez, 2006, p.10). Acquiring cultural capital is also an objective for leaders of social justice to impart to their constituents (Housel, 2012) in order to promote synergy that can combine the personal, professional, and scholarly practice of administrators (Brooks & Tooms, 2008). The need for social justice competencies for higher

education leaders is emphasized by Zalaquett, Foley, Tillotson, Dinsmore, and Hof (2008) by calling attention to the rapid transformation of the racial and cultural population in domestic universities, and the social impact of economic, psychological and various injustices of devalued groups (p. 328). Administrators who are charged with social justice outcomes must work to change the norms of institutional culture, and not just exist at the margins of leadership practice (Williams & Clowney, 2007).

The significance of identifying the context for practice is articulated by Torres-Harding, Siers and Olson (2012) who examined social justice in the context of the Social Justice Scale (SJS), and the importance of “more fully understanding the process of moving from attitudes to actions” (p. 78). Only one of the four subscales of the SJS link directly to practice, the SJS 4, which measured self-reported behavioral intentions from just four questions embedded in a 44-item list of standardized inquiry statements intended to evoke social justice beliefs inclinations. Preliminary to their development of the SJS, the authors discuss the context surrounding intentions to enact social justice work stating succinctly, “few scales have been developed to specifically measure these components of social justice work” (p. 79). In support of the need for this research study on how social justice practice is enacted, those scales do not measure or exemplify practices, and instead focus on participants’ value and engagement of social justice behavior, and social justice work in the field of mental health. The data from my study intends to present the context and components of social justice exemplars that could be replicated to inform the development of a best practice model.

The literature for higher education, social justice leadership, and related topic searches do not reveal any specific tool or method that mimics this study’s objective, however a number of studies do address assessment and identification of context and components that are related to

practice. One of the ways that those components are identified in a diverse environment is through campus climate. Much like building effective social justice initiatives, building a good campus climate involves caring, community building, democracy, and equity (Schultz, 2010). Evans and Herriott (2004) note, “all educators are responsible for creating positive, supportive climates in which all students can grow and develop... into compassionate and caring individuals” (p.332). In building a positive campus climate, higher education administrators are enacting social justice by creating caring, just, and more democratic communities, and these may be necessary components in the context of socially just practice.

Principals in a leadership theory study defined social justice leadership to mean “making issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions ... central to their advocacy, leadership practice, and vision” (Theoharis, 2007, p.223). In a study to develop social justice leadership theory, Theoharis (2007) related his research to leadership practice by sampling principals and collecting the strategies they developed to sustain social justice work. Another perspective on leadership competencies is presented from counselor education programs that are providing multicultural and social justice leadership training, where empathy and cross-cultural awareness are emphasized (Zalaquett et al., 2008). Upon examining these social justice definitions, it is apparent that they are relevant to the context where higher education administrators are practicing, and therefore data from this study may inform a model for leaders of social justice practice in post-secondary education.

Summary

Administrators manage organizational meaning, and participate in the cultural context of their universities and colleges (Kempner, 2003). Although in the context of community colleges, Kempner’s (2003) study acknowledges the need for leaders to have an understanding of diversity

and culture, a recurring theme in both K-12 and higher education. Theoharis (2007) notes the lack of literature on how leaders enact social justice, validating the need for research in the area of practice, and acknowledging that the majority of literature on social justice leadership in higher education is focused on K-12 educational leadership preparation programs. In Furman's (2012) study on leadership preparation programs, she discusses the limitations of the current literature not addressing the actual skills needed for practice in a K-12 setting, and this is germane to further emphasizing the need for the development of praxis tools for higher education leaders who are expected to enact social justice practices. To build a best practice model, literature across both K-12 and higher education disciplines must be combined to extract the context and components that are not available in the literature succinctly for the practices of higher education leaders.

CHAPTER III

Method and Procedures

Research Design

Qualitative Method. The design of this research study was qualitative, which is frequently reflective of a deep involvement in the issues of marginalized groups (Creswell, 2013). In qualitative studies, the researcher is a part of the research by being the collector, interpreter, and a full part of the research process alongside the participants and the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). The choice of qualitative over quantitative methods was to emphasize the experiences of the participants, to explore areas not thoroughly researched, and to “connect with the research participants and see the world from their viewpoint” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p.5). Inductive logic was utilized in this qualitative study to facilitate the general theory at the conclusion of the data collection and analysis, after broad patterns and themes were identified from the data and posited against the literature to form recommendations (Creswell, 2009).

This qualitative study utilized the characteristics of rigorous methods as suggested by Creswell (2013). Those process steps included collecting data in the field and summarizing with the use of qualitative software, Dedoose, to chart an evolving design from participants’ views. This study began with a singular focus on social justice, and progressed to identifying related themes and factors that developed from the participants’ accounts into the more complex descriptions of practice. Analysis explored themes that emerged from the personal experiences of the participants who were positioned equally as contributors in the study. Finally, the qualitative method allowed the researcher to present the data inductively as a theory to support relationships among the concepts purported by the data (Creswell, 2009).

Grounded Theory Methodology. The strategy for inquiry utilized grounded theory since one clear theory is not apparent for the process of putting social justice into practice, nor is one theory presented consistently in the literature. Grounded theory is a strategy of inquiry where a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction is grounded in the views of participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2015).

Complex meanings created by individuals are a hallmark of social constructivism (Creswell, 2013) and in this study, reflect the connection of administrators to their interpretation of social justice. This philosophical perspective along with descriptors of practice efficacy, credibility, and transferability, align with the substantive format of a constructivist design (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Constructivism allows for the researcher to generate a pattern of meaning and recognize that the generation of meaning is always social, so their position as a researcher and the context of the data collection all contribute to the understanding presented (Creswell, 2013). Given the disparate goals that units within a university have from serving multiple constituencies while being charged with social justice outcomes, it was important to ask questions that elicited how individuals experienced the process of putting social justice goals into practice. This constant comparative method was appropriate since the premise of constructivist grounded theory focuses on the “experience within embedded, hidden networks, situations, and relationships” emphasizing diverse complexities (Creswell, 2013, p.87).

The collection and interpretation of this data in a natural setting, through emergent design, and guided by the participants’ meanings, stayed dedicated to the characteristics of qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). Seeking practical knowledge from administrators about how they enact social justice in their practice allowed for the research site to become the interpretive lens. This study gathered data from the participants’ descriptions of how they

enacted practice, framed in the protocol by four foundational tenets of social justice: democracy, equity, caring, and community. Qualitative procedures were appropriate for this study because the characteristics focused on inductive data analysis, interpretive inquiry with multiple views from the researcher, readers, and participants, and a holistic account to develop a complex picture of the research problem (Creswell, 2009, p. 175-176). Grounded theory methodology allowed for inquiry that produced data that drove the theory, where “data collection and analysis continued in an ongoing cycle throughout the research process” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p.7).

Higher education administrators who put social justice into practice must consider these four tenets of socially just work: equity, democracy, community, and caring. Thus, “better understanding what we mean when we call for social justice in education can hopefully contribute to ... engaging each other across differing passions, commitments and agendas” (Hytten & Bettez, 2011, p.21). To define success within a social justice mission, administrators are left to experiment with few boundaries or best practices to guide them since research is sparse with regard to successful programs or practices that produce outcomes which improve the core values of the social environment.

In summary, grounded theory was comparatively the right choice for this study because of its strength for smaller data sets, its intentionally exhaustive coverage of the data, and the assertion that the data will be the evidence that supports interpretation by the researcher (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2011). By utilizing a grounded theory approach, I endeavored to find components and context from the practices of various social justice administrators at Northern State; this study produced data to provide a typology of social justice practice relevant to higher education leaders.

Research Site

The research site was also the work location of the researcher. Situated as the nation's most diverse public research university on the east coast, as defined by *US News & World Report* (2012), Northern State (alias) was the primary source for data collection. Northern State is one of four major university locations in a state system. Northern State was founded in 1908, has a majority (89%) commuter population, and an enrollment of approximately 11,500 undergraduate and graduate students, in over 40 majors and 50 graduate degree programs. There are nearly 600 full time faculty and over 750 full time staff. The Carnegie Classification of the university is a research university with "high research activity" and a special classification of "community engagement".

Northern State boasts more than 100 nations represented by its student body. According to the chancellor of Northern State:

"The university's location is both a defining influence in its story and a distinctive strength, especially as it serves to attract talent: generations of students hungry for the opportunities afforded by gaining a first-rate higher education in a major American urban center, faculty who vigorously embrace the opportunity to produce high impact scholarship, engage the community, and prepare these students for professional success and informed citizenship."

Since the research site at Northern State is cited as a national leader in diversity (Brown-Glaude, 2009, p. 10) it provided a robust sample of administrators that are operating in a diverse community with a vast array of opportunities to practice social justice.

Research Sample

The research sample was drawn exclusively from Northern State where select administrators had identified themselves as currently implementing programs or policy related to the social justice mission of their institution. A purposeful sample of convenience was chosen based on administrators who could meet the timeline for data collection at the research site (Creswell, 2013). Emerging categories and common similarities and differences were examined across the participant demographics to theoretically sample different groups to maximize categorical results (Creswell, 2009, p.13). Administrators were purposefully chosen with either dean/director or chancellor-level responsibilities, and from various campus units related to academic services, student life, and campus leadership.

I utilized snowball sampling by starting with administrators with whom I share campus-wide responsibilities for outreach on social justice issues such as the Diversity Taskforce, and then found participants who were willing to participate in the study. This was not a representative sample in quantifiable terms related to the demographics of Northern State's student or even administrative population. As an administrator at the research site, I had access and interaction with many peers and leaders who either overtly or covertly have social justice as a major objective within their department or unit's mission.

I interviewed six administrators from different hierarchal levels such as directors, assistant deans, associate deans, and associate chancellors, from the university system's urban campus. Appendix B provides a demographic table of the participants. Some participants were from degree-granting academic units representing the liberal arts and professional schools. Other participants were from non-academic units such as student service hubs, diversity outreach centers, and university leadership offices. This breadth of representation was intentional to

present a cross-section of administrators who work with students, other leaders in the university, and the greater city and state community. This diverse group had the scope to provide insight for how successful social justice programs are exemplified in higher education.

My interviews posed no or minimal risk since I inquired primarily about their normal work operations. I made clear to participants that their answers will not be shared across the interviews with other administrators in order to eliminate the fear of poor practices or incomplete goals being reported up through the hierarchy. Some participants were women or minorities, but that was only a secondary characteristic and that was not part of the selection criteria. No children participated in this study.

Data Collection

Participants were asked to sign an informed consent form in order to participate in a face-to-face interview with the researcher in a mutually agreed upon private location, in order to make the participants feel at ease with sharing richly detailed information. Participants were ensured confidentiality across the interview set, and alias names were assigned to the transcripts in a separate data file apart from the recordings or analysis files, in accordance with IRB standards. A full IRB protocol was submitted with one revision subsequent to proposal defense, including a consent form that each participant signed prior to the scheduled interview. Interview question protocol is provided in Appendix A. Those forms were returned to the participants approximately one week after the interview was complete, along with a personalized thank you note and coffee gift card, the latter of which was not part of the agreement to participate in the study.

The interview protocol lasted approximately one hour and consisted of semi-structured questions with a primarily open-ended format; the researcher engaged primarily in her role as investigator with minimal collegial conversation in order to set the tone for the study objectives

taking precedent. The interviews were audio taped by two devices simultaneously, and the researcher took observational notes, though those were not used in coding the data. Each interview was transcribed professionally for the duration of the recording in order to facilitate coding. After transcribing was received, the researcher reviewed each interview in its entirety to ensure credibility of the session (Creswell, 2013); for further validity, the triangulation of data occurred across the interview data when participants would refer to one another's practices as examples of social justice in action, or concur explicitly on collaboration partners (Creswell, 2009). Coding occurred and is fully explained in the Analysis section; transcripts were uploaded to qualitative software where they were housed for the duration of the study analysis, without reference to study participants' identities except for alias code names used throughout the study.

Semi-structured protocol interviews had been developed to gather more in-depth qualitative data (Creswell, 2009). Each interview had the same foundation of questions using exploratory verbs to discover and explore the breadth of professional social justice practices, interpretation of institutional mission embedded in practice examples, and inquiry about the context surrounding the practice process. Utilizing a grounded theory approach, since there was not a presumptive theory underlying this study, questioning was reviewed continually and modified slightly for subsequent participants as categorical priorities emerged throughout the interview process (Creswell, 2009). I relied on a line of questioning that allowed participants to self-report via a semi-structured interview on their interpretation of how they practice the tenets of social justice such as promoting equity, community-building, and production of democratic citizens through the work of their unit.

In grounded theory, as Creswell (2009) suggests, "the questions may be directed toward generating a theory of some process." The questions were directed towards the exploration of

practice that leads to fulfilling the social justice mission of the unit or campus, the components of such practice, and context that administrators used to produce such practice. The interview questions were also focused on the exploration of the development of programs, strategies for campus collaborations, and generating a theory for identifying the context of social justice practice (Creswell, 2009, p.130).

Data Analysis

Creswell (2013) suggests a procedure for grounded theory research that involves questions typically asked in interview format, coupled with observations, documentation review, and analysis of data in stages. An interview protocol was utilized in a 'zigzag' format as described by Creswell (2013) to maximize the development of indicators for practice by allowing for flexibility in questioning as themes or terms appear. The zigzag approach uses field interviews interspersed with data analysis in a rotational pattern to determine emerging categories. Analysis of this research occurred in accordance with Creswell's (2009) ideal procedure of generating the meaning of themes and descriptions from distinct steps for validating the accuracy of information throughout data collection (p.184-185).

Grounded theory uses detailed procedures for analysis in three phases of coding: open, axial, and selective. In open coding the categories were developed; in axial coding the categories were interconnected; and in selective coding, a story was built to connect the categories to reach a theoretical proposition (Creswell, 2013, p.195). The preliminary categories of inquiry that guided the analysis of the interviews in this study began with defining practice within the administrator's unit, leadership roles and context, the role of the institutional mission of social justice, and foundational tenets of social justice. The specific steps of examining the interview

transcripts, constantly comparing the categories that emerged, and resisting the urge to impose a forced framework, guided the analysis work in this study.

Analyzing the data consisted of preparing and organizing the raw data, such as transcripts of interviews, in choreographed steps that involved managing, interpreting, and reporting on the data. The strategy for data analysis combined steps outlined by Creswell (2013) to incorporate the core elements of qualitative data analysis, which reduce the data into manageable and meaningful segments. The coding of the data drove an eventual theoretical framework once themes emerge from the categories coded from the interview transcripts. Since grounded theory relies heavily on the materialization of thematic elements, particular attention was paid to identifying tenets of social justice that were embedded in administrators' personal definition of social justice and detailed descriptions of their practices. Analysis was an "ongoing process" that involved "continual reflection about the data, asking analytic questions, and writing memos throughout the study" (Creswell, 2009, p.184).

Interview transcripts were initially coded immediately following the audio recording review, utilizing color-coded highlights to identify major themes. A preliminary code tree was developed, yet upon review of the first interview, the code tree was modified, the first interview was re-coded, and subsequent transcripts followed this revised code tree consisting of the four tenets of social justice being present in both the personal and practice definitions of social justice by the participants. Once the first round of coding was complete, transcripts were then uploaded via Microsoft Word documents into qualitative software, Dedoose, and a second round of coding guided by the color-coded manual transcripts took place. In this second round, excerpts from the transcripts were marked electronically and coded. The researcher frequently reviewed the

transcripts manual color-coded copy in order to ensure some reliability across the data set as themes emerged.

Practice areas were developed out of the first three interviews manually before the code tree was revised; prolific journaling assisted in keeping the progress of coding consistent. The use of quotes was extensive in this study and this datum was the scaffold for the analysis and findings. Analyzing data for process was integral to “the discovery of patterns and the incorporation of variation into the findings” (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p.177). I also utilized a doctoral writing group with six PhD and EdD students of the Graduate School of Education, where we all vetted select chapter sections of our studies in an attempt to reduce researcher bias and uncover inconsistencies or confusion in delivery of themes. In a span of about two years, over four in-person meetings and shared email documents, the writing group reviewed my first of two code trees and the initial findings and analysis framework, and gave feedback on developing the road map for that section. Other members of the group also provided individual feedback on my study’s introduction, plus we had a group discussion about my research problem on multiple occasions. This use of peer debriefing (Creswell, 2009) helped the accounts in the study resonate with readers other than the researcher and added validity to the findings.

Organizing the data followed Creswell’s (2013) data spiral to move from data collection to data management, then used extensive coding to representing an account of a pattern of action with its context and strategies (p.188). This final step is applicable to grounded theory where propositions are advanced to interrelate causes of a phenomenon. Utilizing qualitative database software, Dedoose, the individual indicators for social justice practice were coded. Based on data collected, definitions, practices, impact areas and leadership contextual factors were all coded and led to the evolution of four key findings. The data was analyzed and produced components

and context for higher education administrators to emulate when creating or replicating social justice practice. The findings may form a framework for the development of a professional training model for administrators across disciplines in higher education.

The qualitative interview method yielded a rich data set that answered my primary research question of how social justice practices are being enacted by higher education administrators. The inquiry yielded the process context and impact areas that administrators use to meet the institutional mission of social justice, and clarified how they define social justice personally and within their own practice. In the absence of clear definitions and benchmarks for social justice practice outside of teacher preparation programs, this study could be beneficial to administrators who generally have minimal resources for professional development, and could also add to the literature on solutions for replicating best practices.

Author's Role as Researcher

My role as the researcher in this study is one that experiences the same demands as some of the administrators that I were interviewed. I held a seat on the campus Diversity Taskforce (a committee of administrators and faculty members who were charged with developing an outreach center and hiring a director), and currently work with volunteer boards on creating strategies that promote equity, diversity of participants and programming, and I have created policy that serves both majority and minority interests on campus. I disclosed this to the interview participants in some cases to clarify my position in order to make them feel comfortable, and to encourage a full and rich description of their roles, but I am personally familiar with many of my sample targets so I did not have to share extensive revelation.

My positionality is that of a social justice advocate, especially passionate about LGBTQ equity and opportunity for under-represented minorities in the field of higher education

advancement and administration. My personal views did not get discussed during any of the interviews so I do not feel that I hindered or influenced the data collection in any way. However, I feel that my public support of social justice-related campus programs along with my collegial relationships with my diverse set of peers, six of who were the participants in this study, did allow for the collection of detailed descriptions that may otherwise not have been shared so robustly. Likewise, some of the data collected about their practices, and the context and history by which they have come to enact these practices, was not used in this study because of the personal nature of the interview accounts. The participants took my role as researcher seriously, as many of them also hold a doctoral degree, and they appreciated the work it took to complete a dissertation study. After the interviews were complete, our normal working relationships continued and were perhaps enhanced by this shared experience.

Limitations

The small sample size limited the applicability to specific social justice issues, however the breadth of disciplines represented by the sample participants may allow for the findings to be applied generally to professional development for administrators within higher education. Ideally, to expand the study further, the sample of administrators who are practicing social justice effectively would have encompassed a variety of universities in both public and private settings, of varying sizes, and with both diverse and primarily white student bodies for the purpose of comparison and generalizability. Time limitations precluded this expansion of the sample size and scope.

Interviewing only administrators left out the voices of the students, who were the primary recipients of the benefits from the social justice practices. Likewise, none of the community partners or external stakeholders were interviewed, many of whom are also involved in the

practices as sponsors, supporters, or recipients. Without these perspectives, the data is incomplete in its ability to provide a best practice model that considers the various audiences that the practices will impact. Likewise, I was the sole interpreter of the data, which limits the interpretation of the participants' contributions.

Focusing solely on one campus in the university system that Northern State is a part of, limited the demographics represented in this study, and the sample was not representative of the student or administrative base at the university. However, the sample was diverse in terms of gender (50/50 ratio of male to female as identified by the researcher), and race (one white, three African American and two Caribbean) to some degree. Hierarchical position was limited to those in management roles in the organization, and did not include front-line staffs that often are co-conspirators in the implementation of social justice practices.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

The grounded theory approach allowed for the development of interrelated themes (Creswell, 2013, p.230) to answer the research question: How are higher education administrators enacting social justice practices? Although the research question is simple, the data showed that the answer is complex, even with the four major tenets of social justice serving as the framework. Those tenets of social justice are defined in this study as equity, democracy, community, and caring and all four tenets were linked to the data for the respondents as they shared their own personal definition of social justice and their description of their social justice practices. In accordance with qualitative inquiry practice as outlined by Creswell (2013), the data was rich with description of practice from the participants, and the wide range of the academic and administrative units represented in the sample allowed for triangulation of data on participants' practices. The theory of social justice practice typology in this study evolved from the data.

Participants' data showed that social justice practices were developed in a process of interactions shaped by conditions and context (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) interwoven with influences from leadership, organizational structure, and collaborative input. The co-occurrence of the foundational tenets of social justice, defined as democracy, caring, community, and equity, was a foreshadowing of the complexity of the process for enacting social justice practice by the participants. Practices were rarely serving a singular tenet, frequently produced impact in multiple areas, and were structurally dependent on collaborative efforts coupled with leadership support. Practice domains were then developed as sub-codes based on the data and served as

further descriptors for analysis. Diversity, student experience, financial support, academic access, social mobility, and organizational change were coded as areas of practice impact and added to the intricacy of the findings. Challenges in implementing social justice practice were noted by participants but were not included as part of this study's findings.

The four social justice tenets will be used as the introductory framework for presenting the analysis in this chapter. This study has four main findings relating to social justice practice:

1. The four main tenets of social justice co-occur in some participants' definitions of social justice and all examples of social justice practice.
2. Process is the foundational aspect of all social justice practice.
3. Collaboration has a significant role in enacting social justice practice.
4. Leadership was a necessary catalyst in enacting social justice practice.

Collectively, these four findings reflect the answer to the research question of how social justice practices are being enacted by higher education administrators.

Co-occurrence of Social Justice Tenets

The first finding is anchored in the co-occurrence of the four tenets in participants' definitions for social justice and practices. The four social justice tenets used as the introductory framework are interwoven by the participants as they described both their own definition of social justice, and in their explanation of specific practices they defined as having a social justice focus. Together, these descriptions contained a co-occurrence of the four major tenets of social justice, defined in this study as equity, democracy, community, and caring. The table below (Table 1) offers a compilation of the co-occurrence of key foundational tenets when participants were asked for their definition of social justice, and when they were asked to provide examples of their own social justice practices.

Codes	Codes								Totals
	democracy - sj def	community - sj def	caring - sj def	equity - sj def	democracy - practice def	caring - practice def	community - practice def	equity - practice def	
democracy - sj def		5	5	14	2	1		3	30
community - sj def	5		4	7			1	1	18
caring - sj def	5	4		3					12
equity - sj def	14	7	3		2	1		4	31
democracy - practice def	2			2		39	44	49	136
caring - practice def	1			1	39		60	37	138
community - practice def		1			44	60		42	147
equity - practice def	3	1		4	49	37	42		136
Totals	30	18	12	31	136	138	147	136	

Table 1: Co-Occurrence of Social Justice Tenets. This chart summarizes frequent co-occurrences of social justice tenets in respondents' definition and practice data.

The interview protocol for the participants listed the four foundational tenets of social justice that frame this study, but in addition, all participants were asked to define social justice in their own terms. Subsequently, the next interview question asked them to use their personal definition as the basis for providing instances of social justice practices being enacted in their units. The finding of these tenets occurring simultaneously was a leading indicator of the complexity of social justice as a process, a finding discussed later in this chapter.

Multiple tenets represented in social justice definitions by participants. The interview protocol asked the participants for their personal definition of social justice after having framed the question with the four foundational tenets of democracy, community, caring,

and equity. This introductory question was intended to frame the conversation in terms of foundational tenets of social justice and then transition to questions of how participants would illustrate their practices using their own vocabulary for social justice. All of the participants used the four foundational tenets as a starting point to enhance and personalize the definition of social justice within the context of their roles at Northern State. Across the sample, irrespective of title (e.g. dean/director, chancellor's office) the participants primarily used the tenets of democracy and equity thematically to describe their own position on social justice. As Kennedy stated with regard to his academic unit:

“Within the school ... I believe that we are called to be even more aware of social justice tenets because ... we have to take intentional measures to be sure that we're inclusive in our admission's program.” He continued with his explanation extending to the teaching demographic, “[In this] profession you generally see a very homogenous group of faculty ... who make it to the top level.”

Kennedy's use of the word 'intentional' in describing both how he strives for inclusivity in his unit, and how he positions his actions beyond dialogue about social justice, was echoed by other administrators who used democracy and equity in their definitions.

Adrian used a practice example of a classroom policy that has a theme of democracy and equity, “social justice also says that those roles have to be examined by who they were set up by, who they were set up for, how they either engage or disenfranchise others.” Adrian's personal definition of social justice focused on the broader education community and also included the tenet of caring with democracy and equity where “...issues around equity... access...[and] an environment where people are safe psychologically, physically and emotionally, and we look at a place that celebrates individuals”. Gale chose not to add any more terms to the four foundational

tenets and clarified her definition of social justice to “focus more on the equity and opportunity values within social justice.” Similar to Adrian’s policy example, Gale added a point that reinforces the historical and contemporary complexity of the definition of social justice saying “you cannot talk about the historical trademark and background of education in the country without understanding who it was intended for in the first place and who still missed out on education” which reinforces the complexity of the definition of social justice both historically and in present day.

Kennedy struggled with a concise definition of social justice but also had elements of equity and democracy embedded in its essence. He started his definition speaking broadly about the campus community, “I think, number one, there has to be an awareness” and went on to explain, “I think there has to be some sort of intentional dialogue... I think that [the definition is] active. It’s more than a thought.” He transitioned his explanation of his social justice definition by linking to practices in his academic unit saying that social justice was “consideration and awareness of your situation and outreach and perhaps programming to ensure inclusiveness to all groups.” Cody is grounded in enacting social justice in a democratic and equitable manner and adds caring to his personal definition saying, “social justice would be in displaying a concern for the plight of others. And taking action on it too... cause it’s not enough just to know, you know, you need to do something.” Cody emphasizes the role of caring, referencing his religious underpinnings in his social justice practice when he explains his foundational beliefs as, “bearing each other’s burdens and showing a genuine concern and responding to what you witness.” The co-occurrence of multiple tenets in defining social justice was prevalent in both personal and practice definitions by participants.

Devon used terms commonly found to describe social justice as being “about equity and access for all people regardless of ... social identities... [such as] social class, race, religion, gender, [and] sexual orientation”. Cody was not as enthusiastic in embracing the four tenets to define social justice and described equity in a more holistic way as “being thoughtful about someone else and their needs, and their desires, and their focus” and went further to define his philosophy on his role in social justice as “taking action... bearing each other’s burdens and showing a genuine concern and responding to what you witness.” The social justice tenets of caring and community are present in how Cody discusses his definition of social justice within the campus community:

“They have not had the resources, many of them, to take care of themselves growing up.

So they’re not apt to reach out for help in the form of counseling services. Many won’t go to health services as well because they were brought up to just deal with whatever sickness is.”

Throughout these personal definitions, even if not overtly stated, multiple tenets were co-occurring to fully describe an administrator’s position on social justice.

The co-occurrence of democracy, equity, and caring tenets are also present in administrators’ roles with students. As Devon noted “we have to make some changes in order to provide equity amongst all of the groups, particularly students.” Adrian’s unit staff follows that theme by being “more oriented in terms of wanting to ask ‘do students feel comfortable in their classroom... do students feel comfortable when they come here’ [to the dean’s office].” The co-occurrence of democracy, equity, and caring also resonate in the philosophy of Adrian’s office where he applies his social justice definition as “justness within... rules, regulation,

accountability.” In these cases, the co-occurrence of caring, democracy, and equity is also present in the definitions of social justice practice.

Equity and democracy also co-occurred with another foundational tenet, community, within the social justice definition offered by some administrators. In this study, community refers to either campus community of students, staff, and faculty, or to the city community of residents and anchor institution partners. This dual-characterization is explained by Devon as she frames her social justice definition in the context of the campus community:

“For me social justice is about issues of equity and access for all people regardless of a whole host of social identities. So for me that incorporates social class, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation and all those things. So starting from that all the work that I try to do both in my research and as an administrator is to make sure that that’s actually happening, that that equity and access is happening across the board. Sometimes a little harder than not given how structures have been set up, institutional structures [that] were created, not realizing how unequal they, or maybe they were very intentionally unequal but how we have to make some changes in order to provide equity amongst all of the groups, particularly for students I think it’s really hard.”

Blair also uses the student perspective to define her view of social justice, “I think about it mainly along the lines of equity.” She notes that her role on an internal committee is also focused on equity, caring, and democracy for students. She explains that the group uses a working definition of social justice to “ensure that [every underrepresented] student’s experience is the same as any other mainstream student.”

The tenets of social justice are personified in the demographic of the student body at Northern State and co-occur within the definitions that administrators use to guide their work.

Gale, who works with high-achieving students, describes the undergraduates as mostly “South Asian... followed by White... [and] students who would consider themselves Middle Eastern”. Northern State is the nation’s most diverse higher education institution according the *US News & World Report (2014)* and therefore its student body has no majority ethnic group per se. Gale provided a real-life scenario of diversity and democracy defining her social justice practice in terms of her advisement responsibilities by role-playing a conversation:

“We want to make sure that if... you want to be a doctor that you understand what’s really going to look like when you go to a medical school... they’re in large urban centers where you’re going to see people just like who you see [here].”

Similarly, Kennedy oversees student services in an academic unit, however his equity challenge is that males are the underrepresented population. In higher education, males are more often referred to as the dominant demographic in terms of equity in academics (Feltman, 2015). Kennedy sees democracy and equity co-occurring with caring in both the campus and city communities as he attempts to recruit more males into health care academics and explains, “we feel the need to educate young people and older people and the immediate community on fields and health sciences as well.”

Cody utilized his previous experience at Southern State to link to his work with both campus and city communities to emphasize the tenets of community and equity co-occurring in the practice example where “the whole community in [Southern State’s city]... we did our Kwanza celebration... kids running around all over the place, vendors all of the place, and a free meal.” At Northern State, Cody emphasized the co-occurrence of equity and democracy with community that impacts the city community noting, “the dining program in particular, we hire

employees from, I don't know 40 or 50 people, that live in the community... one of the tenets of an anchor institution that you're contributing to the economic development of the community."

Social justice definitions were sometimes rooted in personal identity and provided an insightful context for how administrators enact their practices, as Adrian explained:

"I understand that I don't ask for permission to speak, I just speak [at meetings]. I learned that I can speak for long periods of time and no one will interrupt. I've learned that titles on campus, especially if you're a white male, provides you lots of access and no one questions it."

Personal experiences comprised of equity and democracy themes also effected how participants defined social justice, as Adrian described the impact of his undergraduate collegiate experience on how he now defines social justice:

"My mentors were a mix of different genders, different ethnicities, different sexual orientation... I had a very stark wake-up call about what it meant to be different in that environment...and [it] allowed me to understand that there could be a potential change that I could do someplace else."

Gale, speaking in terms of how the definition of social justice effects how she manages her staff, expressed caring in terms of being able to "get it, because both of them [her staff] are non-white... so her being able to ...take a personal day [for her son], I get it because of what I see everyday, what I've experienced." These personal imprints reflect the tenets of democracy and caring co-occurring at a deeply personal level in the enactment of social justice practice by administrators.

Two foundational tenets of social justice, caring and community, were also co-occurring when administrators answered the first question in the protocol asking them to define social

justice. Devon explained that caring is not always simple when it comes to being equitable, as “in some ways...social justice also means being clear across the board. Across the board is great for some and not so great for others.” Devon notes the tenet of caring present in the campus community’s policy-making body, “there’s a greater focus on getting the student viewpoint... I’ve never seen SGA [student governing association] so involved in the chancellor’s office.” The campus community also has initiatives that have democracy, equity, and community tenets embedded in their practice:

“Encouraging [faculty] to do field trips if they can, encouraging students [to participate in] more international experiences, [as] community engaged learning... we make a concerted effort to have partnerships with both the city and the surrounding environments to get students out into the community.”

She also noted the bridges between faculty and students, when the tenets of caring and community are co-occurring, “We’re making a concerted effort to hire faculty who can address the issues of the students on this particular campus.”

Throughout the examples provided in this study, the foundational tenets of social justice were present simultaneously in both the personal definitions of social justice by each participant, and also in how practice was defined by administrators in various academic and administrative units. The data showed the omnipresent co-occurrence of all four of the foundational tenets embedded in the social justice practices serving the diverse student and campus community at Northern State.

Multiple tenets represented in social justice practice examples. The prevalence of co-occurring tenets was most significant in the definitions of social justice practice. Participants used the four co-occurring tenets of social justice to describe the focus of their practices in

impact areas such as academic access, diversity, social mobility, student experience, organizational change, and financial support. These impact areas are discussed further in the second finding regarding process, however they are coupled with social justice practice explanations in many cases that will be illustrated in this section.

The tenets of equity, democracy, caring, and community were fairly evenly distributed across practice examples, more so than in individuals' personal definitions of social justice. Chancellor-level administrators had practices that led with the tenets of democracy and community slightly more often than their dean/director colleagues. As an example, Devon cites her initiative with what she calls the "direct community" of the city that houses Northern State, noting that "one of the things we realized years ago is that ... most students [at Northern State] are not from [the city]." She goes on to explain how her practice of working with the community is giving opportunity "to students [who] say that they can't get in. So it's trying to change those mindsets and that's working through [the city's] schools." Providing that opportunity for city students involves internal university partners, such as those in financial aid and academic advising, to make education accessible to under-served populations as Devon notes, "this is where class becomes an issue right, an issue of resources." Cody similarly describes the assistance he gave to a community member who wanted to become a student at Northern State and with his guidance:

"[The student] got involved in housing, he's involved in a number of initiatives and launching programs here to get other undocumented students ... the takeaway is that it's not about them... it's all about how they can exercise and learn from the experience and then reach out and bring somebody else into the fold... it's not self-centered."

Cody emphasized the lesson of altruism, and the prominence of democracy and community co-occurring in practice as leading principles for many of the Chancellor-level administrators.

Participants at the dean/director level described practices nearly evenly representative of the four foundational tenets, with the tenet of community co-occurring slightly more often. The student community often faces issues of equity before they even enter Northern State and Blair recognizes this in her unit and explains the dilemma:

“The ‘A’ that you’ve gotten in high school X in this community is not the same as someone else’s ‘A’ in a different community and so for us to build a viable and productive [campus] society we need to start with these younger generations.”

Blair describes the forward progress made in practice with the development of a social justice focused student experience as a “community that’s going to be born, [beyond] the honors college that is currently in existence.” She explains the initiatives, which also possess the tenets of democracy, equity, and caring:

“The programming that comes out of [the new honors program] really addresses those social justice issues, things like social mobility and equity... any of the pre-college programming, they’re trying to level the playing field for those students coming into the process so that they graduate at the same rate as the general population of students.”

Blair also notes the significance of providing opportunity for the community of academic and financial aid-eligible students who are:

“Minority students, disadvantaged students and what have you that are smart, you know. They have maybe the money issue or some of them are just on the borderline and need that extra help and so that six weeks that they do in the summer before starting gives them that leg up to acclimate to what college life is like and [those] students talk about

the fact that they would not be the students that they are if they didn't have this support system to get them through."

Kennedy, another dean who often leads with equity and community at the forefront of his practices, immerses his students in the city community saying that his social justice practices are focused locally and that "their learning is really centered around what happens here in [Northern State's city]." Kennedy added, "We are the only ... program in the state that has an educational opportunity fund program to attract students from lower income areas and that leads to a rich diversity in our program, in our undergraduate program." Both Blair and Kennedy lead their practices with the tenet of community co-occurring with equity, caring, and democracy.

Gale talked about a service learning practice where students are "required to do [service learning] and it's a part of our curricular requirements... allow[ing] them to come to the conclusions on their own, like it's a part of their self discovery." Her social justice practice also has co-occurring tenets of democracy and equity that reflect the racial and cultural diversity of the student body where:

"It's a part of the learning process that you just can't always force these issues on them because then they're just thinking 'well because you're from this particular group that's why you're so passionate about it' ... having them understand no this is about helping all people and not just helping people who look like me or who are from where I'm from, or have the same religion that I practice."

As part of the social justice learning process, Gale's students often tutor local high school students, offering them a chance to consider education beyond high school, which for many of them would be the first generation in their family to attend college. The critical piece in this practice is the symbiotic benefit for the honors students who:

“Do the tutoring [because] what’s the tutoring without them having some of the skills that probably my students just take for granted that they have. So the students will lead the workshops and so it empowers them too, and then you have young people empowering other young people to be successful.”

Like the Chancellor-level administrators, deans and directors enacted practices that met multiple tenets of social justice co-occurring within each example. The co-occurrence of caring is coupled with community as foundational tenets in these practice examples.

Administrators sometimes used the urban residential population that surrounds the university to expand the definition of the ‘community’ tenet embedded in their social justice practice. Devon describes a yearlong shift to programming that brings in “high profile lectures [with] really interesting [local] folks, [such as] Rapper Fat Joe that came to talk about [his] severe weight loss” and how that impacted the student experience. Gale describes a new education initiative for “25% of the [city] citizens having some type of college education by 2025”, which encompasses the tenets of community co-occurring with caring and democracy. Devon also involves the city community in her social justice practices explaining “community engaged learning, that’s a direct impact [...] a concerted effort to have partnerships with both the city and the surrounding environments to get students out into the community.” The co-occurrence of community and caring exists in practice as Kennedy describes his academic unit’s goal to “be a part of [the city community] conversation because we feel the need to educate young people and older people and the immediate community on [medical] fields and health sciences.” The coupling of caring, democracy, and equity in practice by the various administrators in their communities exemplifies how social justice is enacted as a simultaneous co-occurrence of principles.

The co-occurrence of multiple tenets of social justice found in the participants' definitions of practice, and their migration to and instantiation in impact areas such as the student experience are evidence of complexity in the social justice practices of higher education administrators. Devon explains "there's a greater focus on getting the student viewpoint. So we have these study groups at all these issues and there are students on each group. I've never seen SGA so involved in the chancellor's office." She shared that involving the student government (SGA) in conversations with senior leadership has impacted the student experience and demonstrates the co-occurrence of tenets such as democracy, caring, and community.

Other examples of practices that affect the student experience and possess the tenets of community and equity include tutoring and mentor opportunities for city high school students, with Northern State students serving as role models or inspiration for city residents who come from similar socio-economic backgrounds. Cody, Devon, Gale and Kennedy all engage current students to enact social justice practices that impact the community, and those practices also have a positive impression on the students. Devon summarizes the impact of social justice practices on three recent graduates, one of whom told her "when I took your class you drove me, well [...] you drove me nuts... but I get it now. Like having been out in the work world I get it, right." She added, "those [comments] are immeasurable but yet we know we're doing a really good job" although she is quick to admit that accountability for the impact on the student experience is something they hope to track better in the future. Kennedy has some data on the student experience in his unit related specifically to student initiatives. Clarifying the role of reporting on student activities he notes, "Whether that be a walk to support a particular social justice initiative, we know what we've done generally from year to year." Kennedy notes that activities are reported to the academic unit's leadership under the auspices of the student

experience but are not linked to accreditation. He explains “we’re interested in more than just how many activities our students are doing here but we want to know what they’re doing, what the impact was as well.” These social justice practices have co-occurring tenets of community, democracy, and caring embedded within student experience.

A unique aspect of the research site is the rich diversity of the graduate and undergraduate community that allows for “opportunities to educate our students in a way that the other campuses [of Northern State’s system] just do not have” as described by Kennedy. He adds “We’ve got to get our students out there to do that [diversity] work with us and for us, and we need to take a step back and empower them to do that work” as he reflects on his role as an administrator who has responsibilities for the student experience. Kennedy puts students in the center of his recruitment practice hoping to achieve equity alongside outreach to the community:

“Whenever I have a recruitment event [in the city], I always bring students because I say, good, bad, or indifferent, I want prospective students to know what they’re getting themselves into and they appreciate that. They don’t want to talk to me. They want to talk to the person that’s going through it, that’s going to give them an honest answer.”

Other ways that administrators have gotten faculty involved in equity and diversity is by having them join committees focused on issues of under-represented populations. Adrian praised “faculty and staff and students who have come together as part of the queer group” as an example of this social justice practice, which emphasizes the co-occurring tenets of equity, democracy, and caring affecting many communities. Devon talks about the faculty’s role in the student’s social justice education:

“The diversity on our campus [that] our students talk about, I mean given how issues of language barriers, interest of culture background and so there are conversations that

happen in class. [...] I tell them [faculty] it's not about being PC it's about being aware... there is a way you can talk about diversity in chemistry, and so one of the things that we have been doing is having conversations with faculty about not leaving things on the table, and if you do, say that you're leaving it on the table, [and] we'll revisit this issue at a later point."

Some of the administrators specifically define their practices in terms of exposing students to college by engaging faculty members in student issues, which has brought the co-occurring tenets of caring, community, and equity to the forefront of expressing socially just opportunities for all students.

Administrators have also defined practices by identifying what is missing for an equitable experience. Gale described a practice that evolved after a revelation by students in her course:

"[They] came to realize that there was something missing for children of immigrants... so they [came] up with their own student organization that would help provide tutoring and information for students who literally had similar backgrounds... who had very little information about how do I prepare for college".

Another group of students affected by equity and caring issues is the transfer students, according to Devon. Unlike Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) students who often have assistance as early as sixth grade, transfer students are often not eligible or aware of financial aid options, making their student experience inherently less supported. Likewise, in the realm of financial support as a practice impact area, Kennedy makes it his job and defines his practice in terms of "social justice related causes, such as... financial aid policy, where I had a number of students who... spoke at the State House." These impact areas, financial support, organizational change,

and the student experience, are anchored by the tenets of equity and caring co-occurring in the practices.

Devon also uses those faculty interactions to inform her input on policy decisions that guide social justice practices. In one such case she explained that “that faculty members will bring students to me and so the faculty will talk about how the issue impacts them and their ability to teach.” She integrates her student-centered perspective strategically; “it helps me to think about policy when I do have that interaction with the students.” She reflects on her own experience as a faculty member and adds “because a lot of times instructors think in a very linear particular kind of way about the needs of the student and there’s so much more to the student than the faculty member even has time to learn about.” This holistic manner of utilizing practices that have co-occurring foundations of caring, equity, and community exemplify the participants’ broad use of the tenets of social justice.

This section has focused on co-occurring expressions of the tenets of justice in the participants’ definitions of social justice and social justice practice. The next section focuses on how social justice practice is expressed as a multifaceted process. The themes that emerged in answering the research question revolved around process, and that finding is presented in the next chapter as a foundational aspect of social justice practice. All of the findings are derived from allowing the data to form the theoretical structure (Creswell 2013, p.229). The following sections of this chapter will present evidence on the significance of the complex process, prolific collaboration, and influence of leadership in an organizational context. The final section of this chapter will summarize these four findings in relation to the research question of this study.

Social Justice Practice is a Process

Process emerged as the answer and guiding theory for what is happening operationally when administrators enact social justice practices. The significance of studying process itself is an important aspect of analysis (Corbin and Strauss, 2015), and the visual representation of process in this study depicts the complex actions and interactions between administrators within their context of a higher education institution. In this chapter I will discuss the complexities of social justice practice in specific areas of impact and will link that data to a visual model for process (Figure 1).

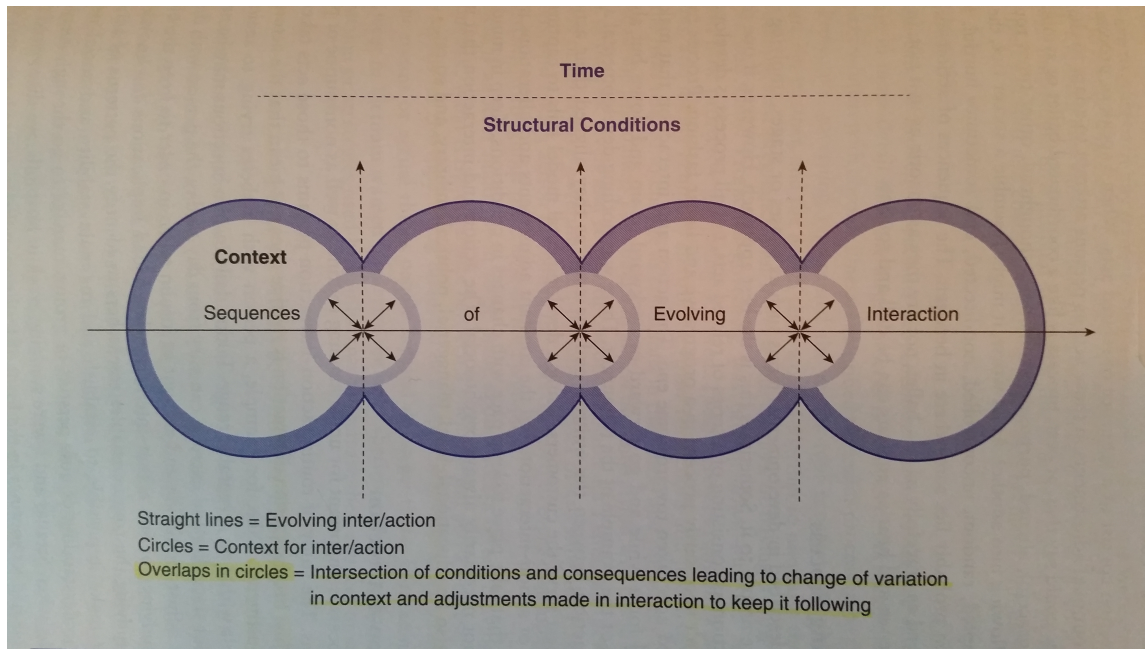


Figure 1. Visual Representation of Process. This figure highlights the intersection of conditions and consequences, and the context for evolving interaction. Reprinted from *Basics of Qualitative Research* (p.175), J. Corbin & A. Strauss, 2015, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Copyright 2015 by Sage Publications, Inc. Used with permission.

Depicted as a sequence of evolving interactions, the Corbin & Strauss (2015) process figure is a road map for the complexity of co-occurring tenets of social justice actions that were predominant in the data. The mapping of the process consists of three key parts, the straight lines, the outer circles, and the overlapping circles. First, the straight lines through the process circles represent the evolution of the practices by administrators as they move towards achieving a socially just outcome. The six areas of impact that emerged from the interview data define these outcomes. Second, the outer circles signify the complexity of co-occurring tenets as context to the practice of social justice. The contextual factors of leadership as they exist at the research site are also present in the outer circles and are discussed in more detail in the fourth finding section of this chapter. Third, by superimposing the findings that evolved during this study onto the overlaps in the circles of *Figure 1*, the data for practice is mapped as an intersecting process. Many tenets are represented across multiple areas of practice impact, as shown in the smaller overlapping circles. These inner circles depict the intersection of practice impact areas and the presence of collaboration in nearly every practice example given by the participants, a condition that is explained further in the third finding of this chapter.

The initial framework to analyze the practices of administrators was tethered to the four tenets of democracy, caring, community, and equity. Using a grounded theory approach, as the data analysis progressed during interviews and initial open coding, the patterns of co-occurrence of these tenets emerged as coupled with practice impact areas, which placed the process of practice at the forefront of the findings. The researcher defined the impact areas based on a pattern of data that revealed focused efforts by administrators in the following areas: student experience, academic access, diversity, social mobility, financial support, and organizational change.

The process by which practices are enacted was explained by participants with thorough description of the conditions in which administrators operate as they move from social justice definition to actual practice within the realm of higher education. Adrian explicitly described his perspective on the progression from definition to practice:

“So for me I think I fell back on the social justice definition that it is a process and it is an end game where we look at issues around equity, we look at issues around access, we also look at an environment where people are safe psychologically, physically and emotionally and we look at a place that celebrates individuals and celebrates individuals successes... and within that we also have a just community.”

Administrators also inserted social justice into their work on committees and with colleagues in order to produce enlightened policy; Kennedy, who framed the shift from theory to practice, explained this process of purposeful discourse here:

“I think there has to be some sort of intentional dialogue. And the definition [of social justice] I think that it’s active. It’s more than a thought... [it is] consideration and awareness of your situation and outreach and perhaps programming to ensure inclusiveness to all groups. To all groups.”

The complex process of implementing social justice culminated in practice impact areas that were present in academic, administrative, and student service units, and also transcended hierarchal levels of the administrators enacting the practice.

Six practice impact areas within the process of social justice practice.

The co-occurrence of social justice tenets in the process of social justice practice was coupled to the impact of practice occurring in six primary areas: student experience, academic access, diversity, social mobility, financial support, and organizational change. These areas

emerged during the data collection process based on the participants' description of practices they were implementing in a social justice context. A glossary of working definitions for diversity compiled by Christopher Newport University (*n.d.*) defines social justice as "a broad term for action intended to create genuine equality, fairness and respect among peoples". Each one of the actions in this study, defined as impact areas, was tethered to this study's foundational tenets of social justice: democracy, equity, community and caring. Foundational tenets and impact areas often co-occurred in a single practice example and were concurrent with the first finding in this study of co-occurring tenets, along with supporting this study's second finding of social justice practice being a process of complex interactions along a continuum of evolving contexts and actors within that context.

Administrators emphasized their focus on the student experience by using the word 'intentional' when describing their practices and actions, and Devon made a robust connection to diversity when discussing the student population of Northern State:

"We have the rich [diverse] population [so] let's get creative about how we teach it... the diversity we have was not intentional it was accidental... where we're situated with the students we accept. Now we are intentionally addressing those needs in a way that...[was] sort of happenstance before."

Intentional action is also linked to diversity and embedded in how administrators enact their work from a personal perspective. When asked how the two are connected, Kennedy spoke about his identity as an African-American male saying:

"I'm going to say I can't say that I intentionally use my identity. I think that my identity attracts the opportunities to participate in more social justice-related activity. Students find me... I don't think I seek them out based on my identity. I think that my identity

lends itself to, on the student's side, them finding me and saying it seems maybe this person might have more of an understanding of my situation."

These practices that were intentionally enacted by the administrators were focused on the diverse student experience.

Diversity, as an impact area in this study, was linked most frequently to the tenet of community. In this study, community, when tethered to practice, had a broad definition ranging from the university's student body to the city society where Northern State was located. The complexity of the process between these communities is evident as Devon attempted to explain 'diversity practices' in the realm of hiring faculty:

"We're making a concerted effort to hire faculty who can address the issues of the students on this particular campus... which means people whose subject areas hit around all diverse areas so whether it be ADA...racial...ethnic...[or] language."

She went on to explain, "We make a concerted effort to have partnerships with both the city and the surrounding environments to get students out into the community." Once hired, administrators facilitate making faculty "become more aware of who and how, who's in the room, and how they teach...having difficult conversations in the classroom" when navigating topics around race, sexual orientation, ethnic, or religious perspectives.

Student experience and organizational change were the two areas of impact noted most frequently both by chancellor-level and dean/director level administrators. Student experience is an impact area that was present in a majority of the practice examples given by participants and is defined by the researcher as a practice that has an impact on the student in either an academic or holistic way. Organizational change, which is frequently co-occurring with student experience, is an impact area that is recognized by the researcher as an action that affects an

operational or structural part of a unit, such as in staffing, process, or policy that assists students. These impact areas and the multifaceted context they interact in are noted by various examples that emerged from the data to form the finding of a complex process to enact social justice.

The impact areas of student engagement and organizational change are illustrated in how Adrian described his unit's advisement practice that intertwines both areas:

"So I think in terms of access to us, students walk right into our office, they don't need an appointment...we've created an open door policy.... Lots of reasons for doing that, one is we have a really diverse population that works different hours, takes care of children, takes care of their parents.... I also have lots of students who are a lot of first generation college students. So I think and for us the open door policy, walk right in, stay open four days a week late speaks to that population."

Administrators build the bridge between organizational change and the student experience in various ways; Adrian uses his colleagues across the campus for support, and Cody sends his staff to professional development conferences to learn or share best practices. He proudly shared that Northern State's 'De-stress Fest' for students "could be a national model now" and that other organizational issues happening locally are generalizable nationally such as gender-neutral housing, Title IX, and threat assessment. Cody explained how those conference relationships become lifelines for social justice issues:

"We learn from each other. We call each other when we're experiencing a particular issue and we say, how are you dealing with that issue on your campus or in your school and we share information constantly."

Student experience and organizational change also intersect in the process of social justice practice during the university planning process, as Blair noted when talking about the charrette

groups that allowed for the student voice to be heard during Northern State's strategic planning phase:

"I think the greatest piece of it is the information that we can garner from the students. [...] I've noticed that we do have students both undergraduate and graduate students as part of these groups, that's key for us. Their perspective will help us move forward with how we think about diversity, how we think about equity."

Other organizational changes happen when administrators are allowed to implement long-held plans, such as when the outreach center for LGBTQ students was opened, as Cody describes "[the director of the center] said the minute you set up and establish this office it's going to change and it did, right; and [the LGBTQ students] feel welcomed." He goes on to say how changing an organizational practice such as a chancellor-level administrator writing a personal congratulatory email for one of the LGBTQ organization's student programs can have a positive impact on the student experience for those previously marginalized:

"Part of that manifestation [is] the holistic approach to educating these young people. I can attest to the fact. I wrote them a note one day, because they did a fashion show one night and it was like banging, and I wrote them... It's those things like that that just go so far with those people that were oppressed and invisible and otherwise here on campus in their own minds a lot of times, but we've really beefed up and strengthened that outreach in that program for them."

This pattern of data suggested a complex context of how social justice practice was enacted to produce impact in the student experience through organizational change.

Organizational change as an impact area was also coupled frequently with community as exemplified in a policy decision by administrators "to address these [students'] needs...[because]

there was no actual plan and procedure, so... we formed a threat assessment team.” That particular practice was borne from an administrator’s faculty experience prior to her current role; Adrian described a similar practice where he bridges the gap between the classroom and policy to “figure out together how we create some language around [issues]” when giving an example of how a student who didn’t attend class may on the surface deserve a failing grade, but may have underlying issues that are non-academic and require a caring approach. He adds “there are times and places where as an administrator I get to have a conversation to provide access or get to provide exceptions to rules for those students based upon circumstances.” This exemplifies the complex nature of the data and how various tenets of social justice appeared in multiple practice impact areas such as academic access, student experience, and organizational change.

In all of the practice impact areas, participants coupled caring as a foundational tenet of social justice nearly as frequently as community. For example, students needed caring administrators to surmount hurdles of religious respect in the classroom. As one administrator noted, “we have students who need to pray at four o’clock and so talking to faculty and saying you cannot penalize someone for coming to class late or having to step out of class [creates an] inclusive environment.” Caring, along with community and equity, surfaced as challenges for the student veterans in the classroom. As Devon explained, “for them suffering from PTSD and being in the room and so how do we accommodate their needs while being fair to the other students in the room.” One administrator summed up the caring context by referring to the “wraparound service providing” that summarized the intentional breadth of the social justice practices of staff, faculty and administrators at Northern State.

Academic access presented itself in practice in a number of ways, frequently tethered to caring and equity. For Adrian, “being able to assess the skill set [around] ‘can you handle the

work' isn't a negative conversation, it's about let's be realistic to make sure you graduate." He and his team have conversations around the type of work in class and the student's aptitude for that type of work. As he sees it, "those real conversations have economic implications... it's about success." Similarly in the case of academic access and financial support, administrators such as Adrian play a role as "huge advocates for our students" when they come from a family where they are the first to go to college. Students who "haven't had experience of interacting with the registrar or... with a faculty member" get guidance from Adrian's team where they talk through and literally role-play a conversation with a student to let them practice the interaction. Adrian beams when he describes, "helping them to learn how to navigate and practice navigating the system...being able to support folks was really important and to me [Northern State] spoke to me like that." This complex process of helping students succeed emerged as the guiding principle for many administrators as they enact social justice practices.

Social mobility is a practice impact area that was also coupled with the tenet of community in the context of both the student and city community of students who reside in or nearby Northern State's anchor city. Kennedy enacts social justice by using current students from the anchor community as role models, noting, "Whenever I have a recruitment event... I want prospective students... to talk to the person that's going through [the program]." Likewise, Kennedy has students do ten hours of community service in the city that Northern State is anchored in "to have a solid foundation and understanding of how people experience life different from them" As Cody, an administrator who works with both student and staff cohorts explains, "One of the tenets of an anchor institution [is] that you're contributing to the economic development of the community." He goes on to describe how some of those employed at the university become students because of his role in overseeing his teams to "establish a

relationship here [at the university]” that offers social mobility with financial support and compliments the community programming.

Academic access, as an impact area, co-occurs with social mobility and financial support in some practice examples. Devon recalls that many students have said “I never would have come to Northern State had I not gone through this program” referring to the Academic Foundation Center, also referred to as Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) on many campuses. Blair tries to use her own experience as an alumna of Northern State to provide academic and career perspectives for students, noting:

“I want to make sure that anybody that I would sit with and kind of do this kind of work with on a formal basis gets what they need to get out of it and I also need to get something out of it because I learn as much from that process as they do and so it’s win-win if it happens that way.”

For some students, broadening their perspectives on life experiences is empowering, and Kennedy does this by taking students on a retreat that includes an overnight trip “because many of our students articulate that they have never had the opportunity to travel... never stayed in a hotel... [or] seen a Broadway play.” He feels that he has a new role of social justice at Northern State to “involve our students, empower our students, prepare our students to get out there into the community” so that students can “be fearless about their work, and to make a difference.” He puts this in context for students to align with the mission and goals of the academic unit he oversees within the greater university setting. In these examples, administrators navigate the process of enacting social justice with a focus on multiple impact areas that affect student mobility, academic access, and frequently, student experience.

Some administrators also impact social mobility by their own personal identity being embedded in the execution of their role at the university. Kennedy relates to a significant portion of the students at Northern State because he “was a first generation college student [himself] and that’s translatable in these conversations with the students.” Likewise with regard to personal identity, Gale says the diversity of the student body isn’t necessarily reflected in the demographic of the administration, so she says that students know that “our presence, our people of color... on campus it sometimes goes far beyond just doing our regular work” and that she is sought out as a resource for her perspective. When asked specifically about the impact of their personal identity on developing social justice practices, two administrators of color gave examples that alluded to or directly stated this perspective, “It’s extensive simply because they [students] also see me as someone who’s somewhat like them” then becoming more direct added further “because my skin is brown and so many of them are brown that they see me as a role model.” Adrian explained that he may not possess the same racial, cultural, or gender identity as a student needing a socially just solution to an issue, however he offers “I do have a space and a place to listen, to learn and to figure out that there are times to speak up and there are times when it’s not yours.”

Social justice practices sometimes culminate in an impact that students do not always anticipate before they leave college. One administrator describes that transition:

“The diversity, the racial, ethnic, religious... class, and gender, all of that. I think it’s something that is unique so much so that I’ve had students when they’ve come back... [said that] that world is not like here [at Northern State]. [Meaning] that they are the only person of color in their section of [the corporation], that for the most part everyone is male...white.”

Gale further describes a student's first placement in a corporate job where their perspective of their new work colleagues is "that they've gone to some of the... best universities in the country" and then, the student looks inward:

"Sometimes they doubt themselves, but then they get the gut check and they realize 'I'm here for a reason and I made it, and I'm competent and capable, that's why I got the job.'"

Other administrators tell about how students call their experiences at Northern State "transformative" and Gale illuminated that feeling as she described the process of students becoming self-aware in a socially just context:

"They can move from awareness to action because it's much closer to them and because of what they've been exposed to yes, in social media but also I think in the course work in particular on this campus because kids are getting courses on race, they get courses on LGBTQ issues, all of that starts to, all the information now is like 'now I know where to put it and file it', so I think it's hitting home for them and it becomes much more personal... and it's not just about race or it's not just about 'oh I'm not gay so that doesn't impact me', it's about being human and treating people the same, and so now they have a place for it and so now they realize 'this hits home for me, it impacts my friend' and so now they move from awareness to being able to take some action."

This comment was particularly poignant because of its timing after many news stories featuring racial tensions, which Gale said resonated with many of her students, not just those students of color. The process of enacting social justice practices for the purpose of having an effect on students through various impact areas was a universal theme that emerged from the data.

Linking impact areas back to process.

Linking the practice impact areas back to the occurrence of the four tenets of social justice accentuated the complexity of the co-occurrence phenomenon and led to a theory that the practice of social justice takes place in a complex process of conditions, influences, and interactions within the realm of higher education. This connection of co-occurrence of tenets in impact areas and the complexity of social justice practice as a process is exemplified in Adrian's definition of social justice:

“So for me ... the social justice definition ... is a process and it is an end game where we look at issues around equity, we look at issues around access, we also look at an environment where people are safe psychologically, physically and emotionally and we look at a place that celebrates individuals and celebrates individual's successes, looks at challenges as methods of education in terms of different ways of approach, and within that we also have a just community.”

Adrian succinctly describes the goal for social justice practice and yet foreshadows the profound interactions within the process:

“Part of the process as an administrator for me on a social justice area is to figure out together how we create some language around this and how we create some meaning and understanding [of our situations].”

From this connection to process, an explanation of social justice practice emerged from the data that was complex, involved multiple actors in collaboration with one another, and was influenced by the context of the institution's leadership structure. These intersections of conditions and consequences (Figure 1) add density to the theory of process and following the prescription of

grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2015), captured the components that enabled the participants to reach the goal of practicing social justice.

The complexity of the process to enact social practice that emerged from the interview data included the four tenets of social justice occurring simultaneously, and multiple objectives that were identified as six practice impact areas. Action and interaction need to be linked to the conditions that administrators are responding to and represents a “responsive and dynamic form of interaction” (Corbin and Strauss, 2015, p.172). Administrators were utilizing a complex process to reach a goal, recognized as impact areas within the context of their institution both inside and outside of their immediate academic or administrative area of responsibility.

Collaboration as a Fifth Tenet

Collaboration was a significant part of the complex process of social justice practice described by administrators and the data showed it linked directly to execution in many of the practice examples. The role of collaboration by each of the participants is offered as a third finding, and although it is not a tenet of social justice per se, its significance in enacting practice is present throughout the data. As noted in *Figure 1* of the previous findings section on process, collaboration is offered as a condition present in social justice practice, represented in the inner circles. The inner circles of the diagram depict the intersection of social justice tenets with practice impact areas; the presence of collaboration in many of the practice examples has lead to a finding of a ‘fifth tenet’ alongside equity, democracy, caring, and community.

The definition of ‘tenet’ for this study focuses on the foundational elements being an ‘important truth’ for social justice to be present. The presence of collaboration while enacting practice was significant according to participants, when they answered an open-ended question asking for the role, if any, of collaboration in the administrator’s social justice practices. The

predominant answer was an enthusiastic ‘yes’ followed by rich explanation of the many actors involved in producing social justice practices in various impact areas. A performance tool being utilized at Northern State’s flagship campus exemplifies the significance of collaboration in the realm of higher education. Collaboration is labeled as a critical element for social justice operationalization in the Excellence in Higher Education model, emphasizing commitment to collaboration and community (Ruben, 2004).

The data shows that collaboration is embedded in the process of developing social justice practices. Devon describes the process of positioning a new social justice initiative. “I do believe in collaboration because... that’s the only way you’re going to get buy-in,” and she further explains the context of stakeholders who are impacted by the practice as “reaching more out to our students, reaching more out to the community, that is definitely a collaborative process.” Likewise, Adrian says that collaboration is “a super integral part of what I do” when framing his administrative unit’s student outreach work that contains the social justice tenets of democracy and community. He explains that collaboration lets the work “unfold... with [perhaps] something completely different than what I went in with...or it may not be me leading [the initiative].” These examples contain the tenets of democracy and caring embedded in process with collaboration and frequently appear in practices impacting the student experience. Kennedy frames collaboration as being “so important... I don’t think you can lead change by yourself” when giving a broad overview of the process of practice.

Kennedy values his work with “fellow administrators [and] faculty from all different parts of the campus” and calls his own social justice practice “significant” when he is able to impact students. His specific practice example described the use of mini-task forces that bring together student affairs and academic affairs professionals to address student issues. Faculty

members have also been encouraged by administrators to come into the classroom and participate on campus-wide committees, which Kennedy says has led to positive change.

“Collaboration is so important and support is so important and I’m going to tell you that just as a tenet for social justice and change, I don’t believe that change [just] happens. I believe that change happens when you have groups of people who support a certain cause. I don’t think that you can lead change by yourself.”

Devon echoes this sentiment in describing her work on being able to “get our students more exposed to different kinds of lifestyles and cultures,” and adds that her position in the chancellor’s office positions her to have an influence on getting faculty and other administrators involved in new initiatives. One such practice is encouraging more students to study abroad, which emerged from building a leadership development course in collaboration with student affairs and a faculty liaison. This initiative, grounded in the tenets of democracy, equity, and community, required collaboration within a complex process to accomplish the goal “to institutionalize this program, something that worked very well” according to Devon. These collaborations with faculty, administrators, and students happen at both the chancellor and dean levels of the organization to produce impactful change woven with social justice tenets.

The student experience, defined as an area of practice impact, is often tangled with faculty policy. According to Blair, who works in the dean’s office and also on external relations, collaboration is present in the process of enacting a complex socially just practice that will produce “tacit pieces” and “best practices.” In a specific example that contained the social justice tenets of democracy and equity, Blair was collaborating with an administrator to define the key “pieces that we do to ensure that a student’s experience [a biracial student] is the same as any other mainstream student... diversity here... [is] what we’re striving for and... what we’re

challenged by.” In terms of collaborating with the community, and tethering to the tenets of community and democracy, Blair acknowledges the critical role of Northern State as an anchor institution in collaborating with its home city.

“We’ve been pretty comprehensive in this conversation. Just as an additional statement, I think [the university system], particularly [Northern State] is heading in the direction that it needs to for the future as an anchor institution, as an organization that is looking critically about what this means.”

This complexity includes the faculty of professional schools who are doing research on issues of the diverse student body of Northern State and “looking for metrics” as Blair describes their motivation for collaborating on social justice initiatives.

Further coupling of collaboration to process exists with various constituencies. One example is in the community surrounding Northern State where the collaboration of faculty and students studying queer issues has resulted in partnerships with city officials. Adrian has seen the progress over the last 15 years in:

“The implementation of the queer minor along with gender studies... filled classrooms with students who want to learn... collaborations going on... the [city] has partnered alongside the campus... in different ways... grants [and] major front news on the [metropolitan newspaper].”

Cody described how monitoring the student experience via a collaborative partnership with other departments has benefitted the LGBTQ and entire student community, “[the climate survey] measures the first year experience of students. We’ll probably do more you know with [the diversity outreach center].” He added that a national instrument from the health and counseling center “measures a number of different things, you know, their habits, relative to and regarding

health, and healthy choices, and a few questions on there about sexual assault, and all, you know if they've been sexually assaulted." These collaborations exemplify socially just practices that benefit multiple constituencies, and are enacted by both the dean and chancellor level of administration.

Another constituency impacted by collaboration is the city youth; Gale describes a practice that has high-achieving college students spending time with young people in the community where she has collaborated to "establish relationships with schools or other non-profits in [the city] to actually help people... because it's not monetary... it's service." Gale says she is motivated to create these collaborative practices "because it's valued and so therefore I feel valued, because my ideals are consistent with what is supported [by leadership] on campus." Similarly, Cody says that working with the community is embedded in the process that he and his fellow administrators use in developing social justice practices.

"Now we have a real purpose and a real focus and a strategic direction, you know, and I think that a lot of what we do factors into what [leadership] wants to achieve and that is when we talk about first generation that [city] learning collaborative [...] neighborhood grants [...] and being an anchor institution, so here it is, those basic tenets."

Gale and Cody both emphasized that this style of practice that puts collaboration up front and is tethered to the community is consistent with what is supported on campus by the current administration.

Operationally, most administrators in this study said that collaboration was present as part of their social justice practices. Sometimes the examples were literal, such as when Adrian paints a picture of the registration process: "coming in to our program the first thing you would see that it's all hands on deck... the associate dean... right down to the counselors... we're

together.” Gale is also very literal in describing the role of staff and faculty involved in her social justice practices: “Teamwork makes the dream work. There’s no way that we can get all of this done without people working with us. So it’s essential for me to be able to call upon my colleagues across campus.” Describing the struggles of local city families, Gale shared the extensive collaboration that takes place in her unit.

“Of course admissions and financial aid them playing a role in providing information to not only the students but their families, also getting academic foundations involved, maybe there some of the students can take advantage of some of our pre college programs and I think that’s how everyone kind of works it because otherwise we can’t, we wouldn’t be able to do it.”

These examples demonstrate the social justice practices that could not take place without collaboration being embedded in their process.

The data showed that financial support was another impact area that benefitted from collaboration; for example, putting students from similar backgrounds together helps them achieve a solution. Adrian employs this technique frequently, collaborating with students and staff “to make those bridges for students because then... it’s much more of a community.” Gale explains the complexity of the process to put a practice into action that often involves not just the students, but also the families who “were either children of immigrants or immigrants themselves and who had very little information about ‘how do I prepare for college, how do I apply, am I eligible for financial aid.’” She added that the process became multifaceted and involved several administrative units such as admissions, financial aid, and academic foundations, and had an impact primarily on the practice areas of financial support and academic access. Cody manages his staff to take ownership of their areas of responsibility using collaboration with other units to

help them navigate through complex decisions involving students. One such example given was a student needing assistance with a meal plan policy where initially the university was going to lose money, however in the end, cultural differences were considered, and as Cody described, “sometimes you got to give [money]... and good will goes a long way.” The collaborative process led to an outcome that examined resident students’ cultural needs in concert with policy governing meal plan use, impacting financial support and student experience.

Collaboration is also present in an external context, specifically in the realm of fundraising for academic initiatives that require and supply financial support. Blair is hopeful that the tenet of equity being present with collaboration will benefit future scholars at Northern State to “level the playing field... so that they graduate at the same rate as the general population.” She emphasizes that the collaborative work of units such as the educational opportunity fund program and academic advisement office are critical for “minority students, disadvantaged students... [that] are just on the borderline and need that extra help” to succeed at the university. Kennedy noted that the presence of a dedicated academic foundation in his health science unit “attract(s) students from lower income area(s) and that leads to a rich diversity in our program.” Blair looks at “where there are shared experiences” between donors and students, imparting her own experience as a commuter student as a common link to this era’s graduates. She collaborates with internal units to identify their needs and then finds a match with donors who have an interest in supporting a diverse student body.

Collaboration extends to admissions as well and has impact in the practice areas of financial support and social mobility when coupled with social justice practices grounded in democracy, caring, and community. Blair describes “a particular project... for undergraduate research” that required extensive collaboration dovetailed with the tenets of social justice in

order to build and “bolster what’s already existing... to fund every student that applies.” Devon talked about those same students and how she will work “closely with financial aid about ‘how do we find some more money’ to get these students here” and emphasizing the complexity of the process in collaborating with academic advising colleagues “because I don’t want them sitting here for six years spending financial aid when they could have gotten out in four if they were advised appropriately.” Kennedy approaches admissions by directly recruiting from the community because his health science unit’s under-represented minority is males. He stated boldly “I’ve insisted upon this – that we get out there and we educate male students just like all of the other groups that are marginalized but that we not forget that group as well.” To create a holistic climate for recruited students, Kennedy elucidates

“We have really targeted again not only the racial minority, but also male students because many people forget that they’re out there and that we need them in the field. And many times when they get here they don’t have a voice as well. We are only the second chapter in the state to have men in [this health science discipline] to be a part of the [national professional organization].”

As part of his commitment to the social justice practice he created, Kennedy immerses himself in the process once these students become part of his academic program explaining “I am their advisor as well and to motive them, working with a group of guys, but to motivate them and to keep them engaged.” In this way, Kennedy can oversee the struggles and successes of his students to ensure a positive outcome for their student experience.

Caring faculty and community members highlight two foundational tenets alongside collaboration, where administrators have led a practice to open a health clinic in Northern State’s home city. According to Kennedy, the clinic serves “whoever who walks through the door”.

Kennedy is also developing a practice that impacts the student experience and links collaboration to the tenets of caring, community, and equity as he works externally with clinical practice providers to make placements in Northern State's home city.

"We make sure that when our students rotate into their school [-] clinicals and even in their other clinicals - pediatrics, maternity, all of those. We make sure that our students are placed here in [the city] as well. And that their learning is really centered around what happens here in [the city]."

These collaborators utilize students rotating into clinical practice to support "programs that are aimed toward childhood obesity and oral health" some of which are receiving grant money. Kennedy also added that "through collaboration we've gotten a lot of change put through within our school" and the importance of this tenet is also exemplified by Cody who says he was charged to "build a lot of bridges and relationships with housing, the police, athletics." Cody emphasized the value of various colleagues involved in practice initiatives reiterating that "collaboration was drilled in me... the merit and the value of working with people... really took shape as I got more and more tenure." The importance of collaboration existing alongside the tenets of caring and community are exemplified by these practices in Northern State's home city.

Collaboration emerged as a fifth tenet present in social justice practice and led to cooperation between academic and student service units, between faculty and community initiatives, and bridged relationships with internal units and external constituencies. The presence of collaboration was frequently coupled with leadership in the practice context, and that context is described in the final findings section of this chapter. Blair frames the leadership context that "recognizes who we are and that realization is not negative," and she explains that everyone across the university is working towards the same niche of impacting social mobility for students

and the community. Each of the participants credits the current leadership at Northern State with providing an environment where the tenets of social justice are built into the strategic plan of the university, and therefore, make their role in enacting social justice practice collaboratively, encouraged as the rule rather than the exception.

Leadership as a Catalyst

In this study's research setting, the organization's leadership and its implementation of a new strategic plan, which focuses on socially just outcomes such as improvement to the community in terms of a whole learning environment, acts as a catalyst for social justice practice, and is presented as a fourth finding in the analysis. Part of the process equation for enacting social justice practices contained action and interaction coupled with leadership components, which acted as catalysts to social justice practices. Those leadership components emerged primarily as collaboration, organizational or mission related, or self-described style. Two of these three leadership components occurred in the data as significant factors in enacting social justice practice. A third component, collaboration, was so prolific that it was found to be a fifth tenet of social justice practice, as noted in the previous finding. Organization or mission influence was present in the data in various units at Northern State, as shared by many of the administrators in this study. These influences took the form of teamwork, structural relationships, mission-related outcomes, and executive level support. Self-described leadership style was present for many participants who were motivated by previous experiences or their own identity to enact practices that led to outcomes having a social justice impact. Collectively these leadership components acted as enablers for administrators to engage in social justice practices.

Organizational or mission driven leadership influences. Northern State's mission of social justice that extends beyond the university to the city community motivates many of the administrators in this study. This mission is personal to Adrian who explains, "to me access was really important, the idea of being able to support [people]... and to me [Northern State] spoke to me like that" in describing what attracts many administrators to work at the institution. Gale enjoys the service aspect of the mission saying, "it's us literally spending time with young people or doing something for other members of the [city] community and because it's valued and so therefore I feel valued, because my ideals are consistent with what is supported on campus." This support is echoed over and over by nearly all of the participants, and seems to resonate personally with many of them. As Cody noted, "I cross the other side of the aisle to make sure we collaborate because... it's for the good and welfare [of] the people we're responsible for" describing the benefit to students of cross-departmental cooperation and his personal commitment to the mission.

Feeling valued is also evident in how Adrian affords his staff the opportunity for professional development that enhances the implementation of social justice practices. Conferences provided information to staff members who came back and are now "in the share mode... working together" as Adrian notes how hungry the staff was to get more access and information to participate in the strategic planning process. One staff member in particular is a former student and a graduate so her motivation to join Adrian's staff had to do with feeling valued in the work being done to support students. She saw "support that we are providing students that she didn't get... so for her what we're doing and how we're doing it rings true," and she is now empowered to collaborate with multiple departments to build a support system for students.

Support from the executive leadership is critical according to many of the administrators, some of whom use the example of faculty involvement in social justice practice as a cohesive effort to create centers and programs that address student needs. Specifically, the diversity outreach center and its lounge would not exist without advocacy from an internal administrator at the top of the hierarchy. Adrian frames that initiative's importance, "I think the LGBT Center space [being added] says a lot to the institution," and adds,

"I think the fact that the current chancellor and the past chancellor have had these meetings, conversations, ongoing commitment in terms of money, I think there have been a whole bunch of different things practice-wise that have pushed the [LGBTQ] issue in a different direction. I think the center is a great idea."

On a larger scale, the mission of educating 25% of the population of Northern State's anchor-city by 2025 came from "initiatives started on campus and with various centers." Gale continues, "There have been two conferences, symposiums that occurred [recently]" to forward this city-to-student initiative, which exemplifies the support of executive leadership for social justice practices that cross both the university and local community.

The organizational structure and mission are emboldening administrators to enact social justice practices that have post-graduate implications for students. Blair is a member of a professional organization's committee that is addressing strategy for career trajectory for underrepresented students:

"How do we go into an organization, our member organizations and talk about recruitment of students who are currently on campus, what can development offices do to provide an internship opportunity or a volunteer opportunity within their shop for someone who might be interested in that."

Importantly, leadership at Northern State supports this effort internally, and Blair notes that “the opportunity inclusion committee is working much more diligently to [identify] opportunities” for internships with the dean’s office or other areas that traditionally are lacking diversity in their personnel. This example illustrates how leadership acts as a catalyst to allow for implementation of a social justice practice that provides impact to the post-graduate student experience.

Leadership motivators embedded in self-described style. Motivators for social justice practice varied widely amongst the participants, however Gale summed up her motivation as the impact that access to education can have, based on her previous experiences at other institutions prior to joining Northern State:

“[Those experiences] really shaped kind of my ideals about the importance of education for people who it was not intended for in the first place... seeing how young people’s lives are changed... all the things that [my former students] are accomplishing and that they’re doing because they were able to get an education... [that is] what continues to motivate me.”

Gale also shared that many times, even when programs such as academic foundations are available to students, the parents were not aware of the assistance, and so part of her work in student outreach is getting out to the middle and high schools in the community to make parents and students aware of the support programs available for college access. Likewise, once a student makes it to Northern State, some administrators ensure that no one falls through the cracks. Adrian’s team works together to enact practices that keep students connected to the student service office, noting that they have a follow-up procedure that includes individually tracking student’s progress from one staff member to another. As Adrian explains, “the student in some ways doesn’t just have the introduction [to staff], they have the follow-up... saying ‘hey

where have you been”” and emphasizes that the staff is motivated by student success to collaborate with one another.

Interacting with students directly is in the purview of many of the participants in this study. The approach to this interaction is often motivated by social justice goals that will provide or enhance the higher education experience for these students. Gale credits listening as a key leadership attribute sharing, “I feel like I have to listen and I have to get their perspective... and I see the world differently than some of my white colleagues.” Gale’s identity as African-American lends itself to a perspective that she shares with some of her students “because of what I know my reality is, and so for my students I need them to feel the same way... that they have someone who’s willing to listen.” Gale explains one of her connections to students as, “extensive, simply because they also see me as someone who’s somewhat like them.” When asked to clarify, Gale added, “Because my skin is brown and so many of them are brown, that they see me as a role model.” Yet all that wisdom and perspective often is under-appreciated until students complete their degree, with Gale sharing that “I think that sometimes students don’t really understand why [we enact social justice practices] until the end... okay until they graduate.”

Administrators often have an impact outside of their formal role, which Kennedy and Gale shared, saying they feel like the students of color see them as relatable, noting that from the student perspective it isn’t about whether other faculty or staff would help them or not, however it is about the students feeling more comfortable coming to an administrator with brown skin because they are initially viewed as being more like the student. Gale summarized the phenomenon by saying “I think our presence, our people of color... goes far beyond just doing our regular jobs, we’re also serving as role models for students who are from similar

backgrounds.” Kennedy concurred, noting that students from other Northern State academic programs will seek out his advice in part or in whole because of his identity, asking most often how he succeeded in a top-level administrative role as a young African-American male.

Some of the administrators bring their own student experiences to their leadership practices as one participant describes the impact of his diverse graduate school cohort on his professional outlook:

“My whole entire doctoral program, social justice was its main mission... the conversations were different...the readings were challenging in terms of... how certain privileges present themselves and how do [people] who were disenfranchised either muted [or] not have the language [do] speak up... so there are lots of different dominant cultural attributes that keep others at bay.”

This perspective on social justice as the underlying ‘main mission’ is shared amongst other administrators such as Devon who imparts her student journey to college in her work with students:

“I’m a first generation college student. My parents are immigrants. You know, I grew up in a working class family, right. So all these things - I am our students, yes. [...] I did that [went to college] because someone gave me an opportunity to do so and for me that’s the vantage point from which I work for all of my social justice practices. So working with pre-college students is important to me cause I was in a pre-college program.”

Blair talks about the literal experience she had as a student to connect with alumni of Northern State, “What I have in common with graduates of 30, 40 and 50 years ago is that we all had the commuter experience here.” She continues on about how the current student body may connect back with Northern State, “So the shared experiences [...] might be around ethnicity, might be

around that ... parents were transplants, first generation here from India or Pakistan, or wherever those places might be, and what that looked like for them.” These examples of personal and experiential connections to leadership practices exemplify the complex motivators imprinting on social justice practice.

Internally, the motivator for leaders of social justice practice can be more complex, as Gale shares her motivation for keeping staff focused, “it’s not just race, it’s also socio economic... my administrative assistant does not make [financially] what I make... does not have the education I have, so I have certain privileges.” The relevance of this in terms of enacting practice is that Gale believes that as a leader, “if you really want to make sure that a person is successful in their job, sometimes you have to be concerned about what goes on in their personal lives.” This empathetic approach embraces the foundational tenet of caring in social justice, and Gale uses it to refocus staff on their duties.

Empathy needs to be used unselfishly as Adrian explains “My narrative has no bearing” when describing his gay identity in relation to leadership style. Adrian describes his growth as a leader, “I’ve learned that [saying I’m gay] minimizes their experience or pushes away their issue... so I [have to] learn to bridge in a different way.” The tactic for implementing social justice practice is also about allowing others to lead differently, and Adrian is literal in his approach saying, “My way is not always the right way, because social justice basically says you can’t impose your narrative on others.” Likewise, Adrian positions his identity to keep other colleagues on a socially just track in meetings, sometimes having to say “I just need to let you know that that was really offensive” and explaining the context as, “I can say it in a way that... I’m [personally] offended by it, I’m not saying it for [others]... but can call other white men out because I have permission as a white male to do that.” Adrian describes a core group at Northern

State who have positioned themselves “somewhere between middle managers and executives” and “have chosen to hold each other accountable... in terms of language, thought, [and] debriefing together” to determine cause and corrective actions for when meetings don’t go well from a social justice perspective. By acknowledging alternative solutions to enacting social justice practice, this group of administrators is able to engage colleagues versus dictating to them as they work collaboratively to execute the mission of their institution.

Organizational structure and institutional mission emerged as drivers for social justice practices at Northern State. Administrators who utilized their personal identity and experiences as a catalyst for their leadership of social justice practices often credited the executive support of the institutional leaders as a necessary element in producing impactful outcomes. Whether practices benefitted students, staff, the community, or the city, the administrators were commonly motivated by being able to provide support, access, and opportunity for various constituencies in and around Northern State.

Summary of Findings

Administrators have many responsibilities and collectively can implement changes that have positive effects for multiple constituencies across many areas within a higher education institution. This study examined how higher education administrators are enacting social justice practices. This simple research question was answered by data that revealed a complex process, anchored by the four major tenets of social justice serving as the framework. Those tenets of social justice were defined in this study as equity, democracy, community, and caring; all four tenets were linked to the data for the respondents as they shared their own personal definition of social justice and their description of their social justice practices. Social justice as a ‘process’

was the key finding that evolved from the data in a grounded theory design, and was coupled to three other findings that reinforced the complexity of social justice practice.

The first finding linked the co-occurrence of the foundational tenets of social justice to the practices described by participants, and foreshadowed the explanation of what administrators were enacting in practice. Practices served multiple tenets and were intended for one or more groups such as students, staff, or the community. The complexity within the co-occurrences led to the second finding of practice as a process. The data supporting this finding was linked to a process diagram that emphasized the elements of social justice practice as conditions, context, and interaction (Corbin & Strauss, 2015) interwoven with influences from leadership, organizational structure, and collaborative input.

Underpinning these data of complex processes was the role of collaboration in enacting social justice practices. The proliferation of collaboration in the implementation of social justice practice led to its designation as a fifth tenet of social justice, the third finding in this study. Diversity, student experience, financial support, academic access, social mobility, and organizational change were coded as areas of practice impact and added to the intricacy of the findings. Northern State's executive leadership, who was in the process of implementation of a new strategic plan that focuses on a social justice mission, acted as a catalyst for social justice practice, and is presented as a fourth finding in the analysis.

Investigating how administrators practice social justice across different disciplines within higher education could inform the creation of a best practice model that could be used to replicate exemplary social justice practices. By focusing on a small but diverse set of higher education administrators I collected data that could be used to develop a training model to replicate successful operational aspects and inform those who lead social justice missions. If a

typology for social justice practice in higher education can be developed via the data of tenets, context, processes, and impact areas from this study, then a blueprint for creating an effective social justice practice model could be established.

Collectively, these findings point to a wide array of practices enacted by collegiate administrators that have an impact across the university community. How administrators are enacting practice spans impact areas that provide opportunity and access in the realm of higher education, and also extend benefits out to the city community that anchors the institution in this study. The analysis of the data collected indicated that practices being implemented by higher education administrators are impactful, complicated, and co-occur within a complex process of influences and collaborators. In the final chapter of this study, recommendations for building a practice model, suggestions for replicating practice, and further explanation of the relevance of the findings in this study will be presented.

CHAPTER V

Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion

Summary of the Study

This study was undertaken to contribute to the development of professional standards for social justice practices of higher education administrators. The practice of social justice is not well defined in higher education and traditionally administrators have been reliant only upon idiosyncratic experience. This qualitative study addressed gaps that exist in the literature on how administrators enact social justice practice specifically in the realm of higher education institutions (Brennan, 2008; Hatcher, 2011). The research question that guided this study was a single point of inquiry, how are higher education administrators enacting social justice practices? The purpose of the study was to uncover the context and process of social justice practices in order to develop a contribution to the field of higher education administration that could potentially be utilized to replicate best practices in social justice.

Collectively, the four major findings suggested a predominance of multiple areas of impact being served by practices that are rooted in the four tenets of social justice. Evidence from the study showed that these practices were woven together by a complex process that required collaboration and leadership. Utilizing a grounded theory approach, six administrators who held leadership positions in academic or administrative units were interviewed to determine what specific social justice practices they were enacting at Northern State. The data indicated a complex process intertwined in developing and implementing these practices, and this led to the finding of social justice practice being a process. Evidence showed the presence of the four foundational tenets of social justice co-occurring in administrators' practices, which were tethered to areas of impact that the practices were intended to affect. This study provided

evidence of practices that had impact primarily on the student experience, academic access, diversity, social mobility, financial support, and organizational change. Participants often coupled collaboration and leadership within their practice explanations in a complex context of actors and audiences.

The literature review for this study revealed that the tenets of social justice, commonly expressed as democracy, equity, community, and caring (Dewey, 1916/2007; Freire, 1970/2009; Greene, 1988; Martin, 1994; Noddings, 1984) could serve as foundational elements for the data coding, and the evidence showed these tenets to be present in co-occurring groups within practices. The co-occurring sets of tenets in the data were evidence of the complexity of practices enacted by administrators. The significance of these tenets is emboldened by Garcia (2005) in her statement on the social contract that education implies, “Equality. Social Justice. Democracy. These are the words that define this country’s promise to its citizens... through education.” While that comment was in regard to P-12 schools, the link to post-secondary education is a similar continuum of actions by administrators towards outcomes of greater opportunity for students.

By seeking to understand the context and process of enacting social justice practices, this study provided evidence from various perspectives of practice within an institution that serves as an anchor partner in its community. The multi-layered ‘community’ in this study, comprised of the diverse campus and city societies of the institution, appeared in the data as being embedded in practices alongside the other foundational tenets of social justice. Models for professional development in social justice for faculty are presented in the literature yet do not address the literal way in which administrators enact practices in their communities (Bondy, et al., 2015; Kezar, 2005; Ness, George, Turner, & Bolgatz, 2010). Therefore this study sought to deliver data

that supports the imperative to provide leaders with a tool to replicate practice, which builds social justice competencies in communities.

This study showed that social justice practices impact the student experience via financial support, diversity, academic access, social mobility, and organizational change. Participants often coupled collaboration and leadership together with their practice explanations, which led to those factors being extracted as findings alongside the co-occurrence of the foundational tenets of social justice, and the suggestion of practice as a process. The co-occurrence of the foundational tenets of social justice, defined as democracy, caring, community, and equity, foreshadowed the complexity of the process for enacting social justice practice.

In this chapter, I present the following sections for each of the four main findings of this study: discussion of practices, conclusions from the data, and recommendations with implications for practice. By addressing each finding separately, a comprehensive view of the themes that emerged from this study can be used to inform the social justice practices of higher education administrators in other institutions. A final concluding section will tether the four main findings to one another, and will suggest recommendations for future research and practice improvements based on current literature.

Discussion and Implications

In this section, I will present the main findings in four groups, each with its own set of discussion, conclusions, and recommendations. The research question for this study, asking how higher education administrators are enacting social justice practices, was the anchor inquiry point for each of the findings sections.

Finding one: co-occurrence of social justice tenets. Participants in this study were asked to first define the term ‘social justice’ in their own words, after being offered the four

tenets of equity, democracy, community, and caring as a starting point. Following that, participants were asked to transition to defining their social justice practice framed in their own voice, and this evolved into detailed discussions of how and what they enacted in practices.

Discussion: co-occurrence of tenets. Participants overwhelmingly utilized multiple foundational tenets of social justice in describing their practices, and also in how they personally defined social justice in terms of their roles at Northern State. Devon characterized the campus community as “For me social justice is about issues of equity and access for all people regardless of a whole host of social identities.” Evidence of co-occurring tenets in both social justice definitions and practices was presented in Table 1. Participants most frequently used democracy and caring in their personal definitions of social justice, and emphasized all four tenets across their practice definitions.

The study provided evidence of specific practices that had tenets of social justice embedded in them, which were being enacted in various academic and administrative units. Devon noted her work with students citing “we have to make some changes in order to provide equity amongst all of the groups.” Terms such as equitable allocation, fairness and equity in resources, multicultural and multiracial democracy, and an ethic of caring (Glanz, 2010; Marshall, 2004; Noddings, 1984; Torres-Harding et al., 2012) are prevalent in research utilizing the ever-broadening definition of social justice. Similarly, Adrian applies his personal definition of social justice to his practice in student services as “justness within... rules, regulation, [and] accountability.”

Kennedy and Adrian both spoke about faculty, staff, and students who have put themselves at the forefront of equity issues for those marginalized because of socio-economic or queer stereotypes. Kennedy shared the importance of that effort, “We’ve got to get our students

out there to do that [diversity] work with us.” Through that example and others, participants migrated their multifaceted definitions of social justice to actions in practice areas such as the student experience as Devon shared, “There’s a greater focus on getting the student viewpoint... it helps me to think about policy when I do have that interaction with the students.” This example and other practice descriptions were similar to evidence provided by Kennedy, Cody and Gale that included the tenets of democracy, caring, and equity co-occurring in practices.

Participants also spoke about how their practices were serving multiple tenets of social justice because of the diverse student body at Northern State. The data supported Dewey’s democratic conception of education aligning “scholar-practitioner values of democracy, social justice, caring, and equity” (Schultz, 2010). Gale linked her practice to a historical context of democracy saying “you cannot talk about the [history] of education in the country without understanding who it was intended for in the first place and who still missed out.” According to John Dewey (1897) “School [is] a form of community life,” and while he was referencing mass education at the grade school level, the statement is applicable to today’s higher education campus communities. Kennedy exemplifies this reference with his academic unit’s goal to “be a part of [the city community] on [medical] fields and health sciences.” This study provided data that added to the breath of research on social justice by offering practice examples in higher education that combined the tenets of equity, democracy, and caring.

Conclusions: co-occurrence of tenets. This study provided evidence for social justice practice to not be defined narrowly by one tenet, but instead to incorporate multiple foundational principles simultaneously. The literature does not directly address the phenomenon of co-occurring tenets in practice, thus I hope that this study will contribute to the identification of best practices for higher education administrators. The significance of the need for administrators to

have these guiding examples is acknowledged by Kempner (2003) whose study called on leaders to have an understanding of diversity and culture within the context of their universities and colleges.

The proliferation of co-occurring tenets within practices is evident in all of the social justice practice data and could be a leading indicator in replicating best practices in higher education. Practices presented in this study met several foundational principles of social justice across various units at the research site. Some of the evidence was focused on the campus community and its tie to the city in which the university is anchored. Gale's example of her students tutoring in the anchor city of Northern State is a probable best practice and is evidence of community and caring. Kennedy and Adrian's focus on diversity linked the co-occurrence of social justice tenets in both personal definition and practice examples. Evidence of practice from this study could be used as case examples of best practices for various key principles of social justice because of the co-occurrence of the foundational tenets.

Recommendations: co-occurrence of tenets. By utilizing the evidence in this study, many of these social justice practices could be utilized as examples of best practices. These data may provide a framework to build a resource model of practices that exemplify the four foundational tenets of social justice. Based on the definition by principals in a leadership theory study who defined social justice as “making issues of race, class, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and other historically and currently marginalizing conditions... central to their advocacy, leadership practice and vision”, the data in this study could align with existing graduate education programs. The lack of research on how social justice is enacted by higher education leaders (Theoharis, 2007) is addressed directly by this study, and calls for an

expansion of existing literature in K-12 leadership preparation programs to include relevant best practices for post-secondary administrators.

Finding two: process as the foundational aspect of practice. Developing indicators or a model for practice in higher education is not fully addressed in the literature, yet the need for “more fully understanding the process of moving from attitudes to actions” is emphasized by Torres-Harding, et al. (2012). This study provided a link to an existing model for process (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p.175); in *Figure 1* the context for interaction was offered as the explanation for the evidence of a complex process of social justice practice that evolved from the data.

Discussion: process as the foundational aspect of practice. Participants shared that their practices are a complex process and are coupled to the co-occurring tenets within the context of higher education. Practice areas were developed in the coding phase by the researcher based on the evolution of key impact areas that emerged from the data. This study revealed that the process to enact social justice practices was serving multiple objectives in practice areas of their units including student experience, academic access, diversity, social mobility, financial support, and organizational change.

Evidence demonstrated that the impact areas of practice coupled with the co-occurrence of tenets represented a complex process in which administrators enacted social justice practice. Student experience and organizational change appeared in the data from both dean and chancellor-level participants as evolving actions, noted as straight lines on the visual model for process (*Figure 1*). According to the literature, higher education practitioners of social justice are being called on to provide “equitable access to resources and protection of human rights” (Torres-Harding et al., 2012, p.78), thus the breadth of practice impact areas present in the data was not surprising.

The context for practice was shown in the evidence as co-occurring tenets of social justice along with leadership factors, implications for which are discussed in the fourth finding discussion section. Practice context is shown in *Figure 1* as the outer circles and in the data. Adrian described this context in his progression from social justice definition to practice, “It is a process ... where we look at issues around equity... access... an environment where people are safe psychologically, physically, and emotionally.” He labeled the outcome of social justice practice as a “just community” and that evidence resonates with the literature that suggests an understanding of different issues linked together in the theme of social equity within higher education being vital for intra-institutional issues (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008).

Process for social justice practice found in this study also included the intersection of practice impact areas with collaboration, implications for which are discussed in the next discussion section. The evidence also demonstrated that administrators who are charged with social justice outcomes must work to change the norms of institutional culture, and not just exist at the margins of leadership practice (Williams & Clowney, 2007). This is evident as Adrian described one practice approach to “figure out together how we create some language around [issues],” as he attempted to bridge a policy gap in classroom procedures. Intersecting tenets, practice areas, and factors such as collaboration and leadership are shown in the overlaps of the smaller circles in *Figure 1*. These intersections are evidence of the complexity of the process of social justice practice, and emphasize that social justice itself is a process.

Conclusions: process as the foundational aspect of practice. Knowing now that social justice practice is a complex process allows it to be defined in a broad sense across many disciplines within higher education. It is imperative to provide higher education leaders with the ability to replicate best practices that build communities with social justice competencies.

Evidence demonstrated that administrators focused their practices on multiple impact areas and often worked with one another to create change that had a social justice foundation. Kennedy helps his students to align with the mission and goals of their academic unit while simultaneously having an impact on the community by asking them to “be fearless about their work, and to make a difference.” By examining the components of social justice practice, the complexities of the process can be unpacked to reveal strategies for higher education administrators to share amongst their peers.

Recommendations: process as the foundational aspect of practice. Tharp (2012) suggests that we incorporate social justice language into foundational statements, and into assessment and evaluation in addition to providing training. Coupling this statement with the complex process to produce social justice practices that emerged from the evidence suggests building a formalized professional development program. Programs such as this could assist in producing higher education administrators who are capable of carrying out these complex missions. More research on the complexities of social justice practice process could inform various areas of higher education administration that were examined in this study on a small scale. Beyond a larger sample size and incorporating other institutional demographic profiles, the breadth of the disciplines covered in this study should be aligned with professional development models in key career tracks of higher education.

Finding three: collaboration as a fifth tenet in social justice practice. Collaboration is shown in this study as a significant component of social justice practice where it was present throughout the data in participants’ answers to the research question. Administrators coupled collaboration to practice as an ‘important truth’ when describing how they enacted practice for

students plus their campus and city partners. As noted in the previous finding, the process for social justice practice also included the intersection of practice impact areas with collaboration.

Discussion: collaboration as a fifth tenet in social justice practice. Participants found it virtually impossible to discuss their practices without offering examples of collaboration, naming a vast army of their colleagues across the campus and city community as necessary partners in their social justice ventures. Working across difference is a learned skill, and in the context of higher education, according to Cantor (2013) it is about building communities. Similar impacts emerged in the data from the city community that anchors Northern State. The impact of collaboration on the community is provided by Cody who shared how developing social justice practices with Gale and Devon put collaboration up front, “Now we have a real purpose... focus... strategic direction... a learning collaborative.”

The administrators also discussed bridges that they build for students that need financial support where information-sharing between financial aid, [the foundations], admissions, and academic advising makes it possible to “provide information to not only the students but their families” by having collaboration embedded in the process. This perspective of the broad impact from collaboration is noted in the literature, as higher education institutions also contribute immeasurably to the cultural fabric of their communities and the public invests in higher education as a conduit to mobility (Cantor, 2013; Ruben, 2010). Kennedy, Adrian, and Devon all offered examples of collaboration tethered to the tenets of community and equity, frequently citing the value, importance, and integral part that collaboration plays in enacting social justice practice.

Conclusions: collaboration as a fifth tenet in social justice practice. Collaboration should not be taken for granted in the competencies of higher education administrators, and

leaders should have resources available to them to replicate best practices. The literature suggests that higher education leaders face a series of challenges such as globalization and new student demographics, and need all the leadership capacity possible to affect change in the complex structure of higher education institutions (Kezar, 2012). The evidence from this study demonstrates that social justice practice requires collaboration, and that leaders need to exist in a position within the organization to influence positive change.

Recommendations: collaboration as a fifth tenet in social justice practice.

Collaboration is a critical component of social justice practice, and should garner the same attention as the four foundational tenets for seeking to replicate best practices. Higher education administrators could receive training on cultivating productive collaborations with peer groups that span not just academic groups, but various administrative, leadership, community, and external units that interact with the institution. Policy changes that respect committee member input in a democratic fashion could bridge the chasm in collaboration that exists when program incentives are not equitable. This study provided insight with evidence of positive collaborations for the purpose of social justice impacts, and demonstrated that the intra-collegiate process is complex when enacting social justice. Future examination of organizational structure using the framework of collaboration and leadership provided in this study, for the purpose of mission-driven outcomes, could improve the implementation of social justice practice.

Finding four: leadership as a catalyst. Leadership in this study was integral to administrators feeling supported as they pursued social justice practice at Northern State. During this study, the institution was in the final stages of adopting a new strategic plan that coupled them to the city and student communities equally. Leadership components emerged in the data as

organizational or mission related and primarily as collaboration, which the evidence showed to be its own finding, as noted in the previous finding.

Discussion: leadership as a catalyst. Collaborative leadership appears in the data as a motivating force for Gale because she says her social justice practice is “valued, and so therefore I feel valued, because my ideals are consistent with what is supported by [leadership] on campus.” Higher education administrators are asked to prepare citizens to live in a diverse society (Aguirre Jr. & Martinez, 2006) and this aspiration is echoed in the research on leadership education, which emphasizes preparing participative citizens on moral ground for the common good (Rost & Barker, 2000). Evidence from this study confirms the personal commitment that administrators make to this goal as Adrian explains, “To me access was really important, the idea of being able to support people.” He shared that sentiment as the reason why he and other administrators in this study chose to work at Northern State, an institution on the leading edge of a social justice driven mission.

Support from the current leadership is critical and affects social justice practice both in and around the university. As the study revealed, the current and former leaders of Northern State made a commitment to opening an LGBTQ center, which was a very visible sign of social justice practice from the administration. Higher education administrators are enacting social justice by creating caring, just, and more democratic communities, and evidence in this study presents the co-occurrence of community, caring, and democracy alongside the catalyst of leadership.

Conclusion: leadership as a catalyst. Based on evidence from this study, it is critical that one of the components in the social justice practice process be leadership. Without the presence of leadership as a catalyst, the participants in this study noted that many of the social justice

practices might not have been seen to fruition. Administrators also discussed their personal identities and the diversity of an institution, or its aspirations to become more diverse, could be considered as a catalyst in enacting social justice practice. As Gale noted “I think that sometimes students don’t really understand why [we enact social justice practices] until... they graduate” but she continues that her role is critical to some students who “see me as somewhat like them.” The data on central leadership’s support for social justice practices provided specific supporting evidence on the impact of leadership as a catalyst. As an example, the forming of charrette groups to build the latest strategic plan spoke volumes to many of the participants for senior leadership’s commitment to every level of administrator being on board and accountable for the social justice mission. Evans and Herriott (2004) note, “all educators are responsible for creating positive, supportive climates in which all students can grow and develop... into compassionate and caring individuals” (p.332). Gale summarized the actions of her peers, the study participants, to enact social justice practices as “Seeing how young people’s lives are changed... continues to motivate [the administrators].”

Recommendations: leadership as a catalyst. Leadership priorities, organizational structure, and clearly stated mission goals need to be communicated to administrators in terms of expectations for social justice outcomes. Some of the participants noted that previous administrations did not fully envision the social justice model that exists now at Northern State. By having a truly collaborative process, social justice practice can move forward rapidly, as the study data revealed when participants shared their experiences on committees that had mission driven goals. Administrators also need to be effective leaders within their own units to communicate the impact of social justice practice across many practice impact areas, and as this

study emphasized, these practices need to contain key foundational elements of social justice to be generalizable for best practice models across academe.

Study Conclusion

Higher education administrators focused on social justice practice often have an impact on multiple areas of an institution when that practice is supported by leadership and bolstered by collaboration with colleagues from the internal and external community. Evidence from this research study indicates that higher education administrators enact social justice practice in various ways such as through student service, academic policy, programming for residential and commuter students, community service learning projects, interaction with donors, initiatives from leadership, and integration in the anchor community. Traditionally, and as evidenced by the participants in this study, higher education administrators come from various backgrounds with very little if any training in enacting social justice outside of a specific theoretical model. The intention of this study was to provide a framework to identify how social justice practices are enacted across various administrative and academic units.

This study provided evidence that social justice practice was a multifaceted task that addressed programming and policies for a broad audience. The need for social justice competencies for higher education leaders is emphasized by Zalaquett et al. (2008) who call attention to the rapid transformation of the racial and cultural population in domestic universities (p. 328). In terms of the context for this study, one of higher education's primary roles is to prepare students to function in a more diverse society (Aguirre Jr. & Martinez, 2006). The literature also calls for social justice to be about creating opportunities for those whom might otherwise be marginalized, and is a long-standing component of higher education's mission for public good (Kezar, 2004).

Future studies could contribute to a professional development model for enacting social justice practice by including the student voice and their perception of experiencing social justice programs. Embedding the aspiration for social justice education across disciplines outside of academic and student affairs units could be a consideration for building a professional certification program similar to ally or safe zone training for administrators in higher education. Challenges to implementing social justice practice were collected in the data set for this study but were an ancillary finding that emerged in a later stage of coding and did not directly impact the research question data. These challenges could be examined for links to leadership and collaborative properties to assist in building an effective model to replicate best practices while avoiding obstacles to enacting practice. At the time this study was being finalized, Northern State's system called for submission of papers on "Scholarship on Diversity & Inclusion: Present Findings and Future Considerations" (Northern State internal memo, 2015) to which this study could potentially contribute. Likewise, educational doctorate programs could integrate social justice case studies to help proliferate best practices into the culture of higher education practitioners.

This study focused attention on the actual practices of a diverse group of administrators at an urban northeast research university. Evidence provided the necessary context, interactions, and explanation of process complexities to begin forming a model for replicating best practices of enacting social justice. The examples could live in a resource such as the *What Works Clearing House* (Institute of Educational Services, 2015), which has recently added a section on post secondary education that is focused on interventions for college success. The authentic voice of the participants provided a snapshot to assist future leaders in building a professional development platform that could assist other higher education administrators. Because urban

research universities often have a social justice mission coupled to their educational goals, and because there is no uniform assessment or collection of best practices to enact social justice, this study aimed to contribute to the field by providing data of social justice practices from higher education administrators.

It is the researcher's hope that this data could inform the construction of a foundational model that includes practice examples, and the context in which those practices can be successfully enacted, for the benefit of the student and university communities. By asking ourselves as higher education administrators "what is the new normal for social justice" we can move away from theoretical dialogue about the righteous purpose for implementation of equity into all aspects of university life. Instead, we need to look forward and conquer the hard task of operationalizing the complexities of social justice by using the foundational tenets to anchor our actions. By embracing the evidence that social justice practice is a process, I am hopeful that a model of professional development to replicate the tenets of democracy, equity, caring, and community, can be built for administrators in any discipline within higher education. For these reasons, I feel that my study is acknowledging that to enact social justice in practice is a complex and noble undertaking, which must embody collaborative efforts towards measurable outcomes. Whether in an administrative, academic, or student service role, we are all called upon as leaders to make social justice part of the fabric of every program, project, committee, and initiative we undertake for the greater good of our university community.

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Appendix A

Revised/Approved Interview Protocol

Introduction

After initial greeting, brief summary of study purpose, and confirmation of consent form receipt, the interview and audio recording will commence.

1. Starting broadly, then we'll get more specific shortly, education philosophers have *defined **social justice*** in many terms, although most agree the concept centers around providing opportunity for those whom might otherwise have none.

Four common tenets are: **democracy, caring, community, and equity**. With these in mind:

How do **you** define social justice in the context of your work at the University?

2. More specifically, the *mission* for Rutgers University-Newark refers to 'social justice' in terms such as [use handout as needed]:

Involvement with issues affecting social and economic justice, and civil rights (along with politics, business, law, and scientific discovery).

Thinking about those areas **and** meeting that specific mission:

What practices and/or policy decisions have you participated in or led?

[Probing: (list terms again)]

Can you tell me more about your (program/practice example) and **specifically how your leadership led to positive outcomes?**]

Revised/Approved Interview Protocol (continued)

3. Similarly, the *mission* for Rutgers University-Newark also focuses on **educating first-generation college students, those of modest means, and people from diverse racial, ethnic, national, and religious backgrounds.**

What practice are you engaged in now that reaches students in these demographics, and meets the RU-N mission?

(In other words, what foundational elements and constructs do you put into practice to move the RU-N social justice mission forward?)

4. **So if I were immersed in one of your programs, how would I experience the impact of your practice from a social justice perspective?**

(Literally, what opportunity/benefit would I gain?)

5. Is your work leading change? Or following a lead set by others?

[Alternate question: How have you developed your leadership style to compliment your social justice goals?]

6. Now thinking a bit more broadly about *practice development* [**how you have created the programs or guided your staff in attaining social justice goals**]:

How does **collaboration** (with colleagues on campus, in your discipline, or outside the realm of higher education) play a role in your social justice practice?

Revised/Approved Interview Protocol (continued)

7. Describe the role of **professional development** (either in-house or at a conference) in the development of your social justice practice?

[i.e.: do you take away a lot from shared knowledge with colleagues at other institutions or do you primarily develop your own unique practice?]

8. Which accomplishments in the realm of social justice practice do you feel are generalizable outside of your unit/department yet still fulfill the RU-N mission? (i.e.: *which have cross-functional benefit?*)

9. Do you use your personal identity [*alternatively phrased*: perspective as a (man/woman, LGBT if identified, racial/ethnic identity)] to develop the social justice practices of your unit/department?

- a. If so, to what extent (significantly, moderately, incidentally).
- b. If not, how do you separate your own identity from your practice?

10. What kind of bias do you think your personal identity/perspective brings to your position as a leader in either a positive or a negative way?

11. Are there any **reports**, either oral or written, that you utilize to track or assess the social justice practice of your unit?

[Would you be willing to share those with me?]

Revised/Approved Interview Protocol (continued)

12. Is there anything else **significantly related to how you practice social justice** that you would like to share with me?

THANK YOU so much for your time, your insight, and your thoughtful answers. I will have this session transcribed and may ask you to review the document so that you can affirm your responses, and therefore protect the integrity of the research data. Please feel free to contact me at any time if you have concerns or questions about my study, or this interview.

Appendix B

Description of Sample

The spreadsheet below, exported from Dedoose, contains the descriptor information (as determined by the researcher) of the study participants. Anonymity was agreed upon between the researcher and participants, therefore some detail is omitted regarding specific academic specialty or other identifying characteristics.

Gender	discipline	seniority	ethnicity	other	title level
female	academic unit(s)	10+	african american	non-lgbtq identified	dean/director
male	academic unit(s)	10+	caucasian	lgbtq identified	dean/director
male	academic unit(s)	<5	african american	non-lgbtq identified	dean/director
female	academic unit(s)	10+	caribbean	non-lgbtq identified	chancellor-level
male	student life related	15+	african american	non-lgbtq identified	chancellor-level
female	dean's office	10+	caribbean	non-lgbtq identified	dean/director