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In Search of Social Justice Praxis: A Critical Examination of Senior Student Affairs Officers' Leadership Practices

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IN SEARCH OF SOCIAL JUSTICE PRAXIS:

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF SENIOR STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICERS'

LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

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Abstract

As the highest ranking administrators in divisions of student affairs, Senior

Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs) have the substantial opportunity to perform leadership

in a manner which realizes social justice processes and goals. Framed by critical

postmodernism (Tierney & Rhoads, 1993), this study uses educational criticism and

connoisseurship (Eisner, 1976, 1998, 2002) to document the social justice leadership

practices of two SSAOs. In depth narratives give rich descriptions of the nuances of

social justice leadership as enacted by the SSAOs. Critical interpretation and evaluation

of these practices is woven throughout the study. Themes relevant for the field of higher

education in student affairs are then presented. Stemming from the narratives, informed

questions are offered which can be used to frame further research related to the topic of

social justice leadership praxis in higher education. Additionally, implications for SSAO

social justice leadership are offered, including the need for better training and the

intentional resistance to an evolving neoliberal technocratism adversely impacting social

justice aspirations in higher education.

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Chapter One: Introduction

"Higher education leaders need to pay more attention to the ways in which we are perpetuating or interrupting the status quo that is not functioning effectively. Intention is not enough; higher education leaders need to speak dangerous truths as these discourses have the potential to impact policy, procedures, and—in turn—people's daily lives" (Pasque, 2010, p. 176).

Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs)[1] are typically the campus leaders

charged with managing policy, services, personnel, and budgets for college and

university divisions of student affairs (Bess & Dee, 2012; Schuh, Jones, & Harper, 2010).

These administrators, usually vice presidents or deans, are understudied in higher

education literature in terms of the contemporary manifestation of this role and its impact

on virtually all functions of college life (Jones, 2009). Higher education is largely

constructed in a manner privileging upper-middle class Christian white men; therefore, a

perpetuation of the educational status quo maintains a higher education milieu hostile to

historically marginalized groups including women, people of color, Queer students, and

students with disAbilities (Freire, 2003; Giroux, 1997, 2007; hooks, 2000; Museus &

Jayakumar, 2012; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Due to their vast influence, SSAOs are

uniquely positioned to influence policies, procedures, and paradigmatic values impacting

the campus climate toward addressing systemic, institutional, and individual oppression

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[1] Throughout this dissertation Senior Student Affairs Officer (SSAO) and Chief Student Affairs Officer (CSAO) are used interchangeably to refer to the highest ranking student affairs administrator on a college campus. These leaders typically have the title of Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) or Dean of Students (DOS).

adversely impacting many students (Jones, 2009; Taylor, 2008). This dissertation, using

the theoretical framework of critical postmodernism and conceptual frameworks of praxis

and social justice, first thoroughly examines, identifies gaps, and draws conclusions from

two large bodies of literature in higher education: social justice and leadership. Methods,

including participants, sites, and procedures related to data collection and analysis using

educational criticism and connoisseurship, are then presented, followed by the

presentation of findings in the form of two narratives from two distinct cases. A

discussion is presented following each narrative offering author commentary about the

data presented and the exploration of themes.   The dissertation concludes with macro

conclusions and the presentation of implications for the field of student affairs in higher

education.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore the art of social justice leadership as

practiced by SSAOs to identify for the field of higher education some of the nuances of

effective practice. Leadership is particularized through an explicit focus on the Freireian

(2003, 2005) concept of praxis, briefly understood as the combination of reflection and

action for the purpose of transforming oppressive systems. The profession of student

affairs in higher education espouses a commitment to social justice and inclusion, seen in

missions of the two broad professional organizations, NASPA and ACPA (American

College Personnel Association, n.d.; National Association of Student Personnel

Administrators, n.d.). Therefore this study interrogates how the highest ranking student

affairs professional, the SSAO, employs social justice leadership practices.

The SSAO is chosen as the unit of analysis for examination due to their expansive supervisory portfolio, access to top college or university leadership including presidents, and because of it they are likely to have progressed through a student affairs career. Unlike college or university presidents, who are increasingly slated as fundraisers and therefore often have diverse career backgrounds from both academic and the private sector (Freeman & Kochan, 2012), SSAOs typically rise in the student affairs ranks. Therefore, studying SSAOs has referential utility for those lower in a student affairs organizational structure because the SSAO has likely held many similar lower-level positions, and those who aspire to the SSAO position can learn from exemplary practice. Specifically, SJ praxis (Freire, 2003; Furman, 2012) is of primary interest as a paradigm informing the way SSAOs operate. Studying SSAO leadership strategies aimed at enacting SJ practices (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007; Rawls, 1971; Reason & Davis, 2005) to combat and reverse institutionalized privilege, power, and oppression is the specific focus of this original research.

This topic is important to study because in the absence of diligent social justice (SJ) activism, there is a tendency for leaders to regress toward the mean, therefore upholding the status quo and maintaining oppressive educational practices privileging high socio-economic status and white students (Bourdieu, 2002). Critical postmodernism (Foucault, 1982; Giroux, 1991; Tierney & Rhoads, 1993) provides a theoretical framework informing the entire study, from construction to implementation. The combination of critical theory and postmodern theory to frame this study will be further explained below using foundational and contemporary scholars to explore the associated epistemologies and paradigms. But briefly, for me critical postmodernism allows this

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inquiry to explore and critique both the macro and the micro related to SSAO social justice praxis. Specifically, the theoretical framework provides a structure to examine largely unquestioned grand narratives at play in higher education, such as the flourishing of capitalism in non-profit education settings. The combination of postmodernism and critical theory directs me as a researcher to not only identify these master narratives, but to also dismantle them by exposing (un)seen interests and maintenance strategies. Critical postmodernism necessitates attention to power and how power manifests in privileged discourses such as meritocracy and color-blindness. The framework also helps scaffold an analysis of social identities, intersecting social identities, and the associated privilege, power, and oppression. More specifically, critical postmodernism helps me simultaneously identify dichotomous identities, such as man and woman, or person of color and white person, and also the underlying power structures sustaining these identity-based social constructions. No other theoretical orientation provides the structure to explore all of these micro and macro issues.

This critical social justice inquiry is not only important due to the absence of similar research, but it is also timely as the twenty-first century has ushered increased scrutiny toward higher education generally and student affairs specifically. This increasing oversight from politicians and the public at large is motivated and informed by neoliberal calls for accountability and an expanding conservative economic hegemony concerned with return on investment and cost-benefit analyses. Pivotal higher education scholars Schuh and Upcraft (2001) note that, "the pressure is often more strongly felt in student affairs, which, in an era of increased competition for resources, may be questioned critically about its rationale, importance and results" (p. 3). Informed by the

framework of critical postmodernism, this research not concerned with quantifying the

"results" with which some higher education policy makers are interested, including

metrics like enrollment and retention, but rather with exploring the art of social justice

leadership as practiced by SSAOs.

Therefore the research question guiding this project is: *How do SSAOs enact,*

through leadership, social justice praxis? This question is broad enough to embrace the

organic nature of qualitative research marked by field work. The research question is

particularly well suited for inquired guided by educational criticism and connoisseurship

because action words such as "enact" and "praxis" are concerned with aesthetics or

artistic actionability. Social justice is primary in the research question, and leadership

qualifies social justice therefore linking the concepts. Finally because the research is

framed by critical postmodernism, the research question avoids a good or bad dichotomy,

for there are no correct or incorrect ways to enact social justice leadership praxis. The

research question delimits inquiry to the unit of analysis of a single SSAO, and is

therefore not primarily concerned with other employees or students, for example.

Finally, the research question, *How do Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs) enact,*

through leadership, social justice praxis? cannot be answered quantitatively, so the data

collected responding to the research question must go beyond metrics.

Theoretical Framework

Postmodernism. The construction of this research and the associated processes

are informed epistemologically by postmodernism (Butler, 1990, 2004, 2011; Derrida,

1967; Foucault, 1980, 1982; Giroux, 1991, 1997; Tierney, 1993; Tierney & Rhoads,

1993) and critical theory (Bell, 1980, 1987, 2004; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Freire,

2003; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). The language and terminology used to define

postmodernism is often abstract and confusing (Crotty, 1998; Prasad, 2005; Tierney &

Rhoads, 1993). Tierney and Rhoads (1993) assert that many postmodernists avoid

concise definitions intentionally, as definitional aspirations are a contradiction of the

fundamental holding in postmodernism that no singular voice or understanding exists.

Perhaps more critically, Crotty (1998) offers that, "Instead of espousing clarity, certitude,

wholeness and continuity, postmodernism commits itself to ambiguity, relativity,

fragmentation, particularity and discontinuity" (p. 185). Some have argued that the lack

of agreement among postmodern scholars retards the practical use of the theory to inform

the transformation of oppressive social and political regimes and results in trouble-

making rather than solutions (Traynor, 1997). However I find that postmodernism helps

me ask more informed questions and poignantly does not acquiesce to incrementalism.

For example, many U.S. higher education institutions were established by middle

class Christian white men. Therefore the current academic calendar at most colleges and

universities still reflects Christian privilege by not holding classes on major religious

holidays such as Christmas, or on the Christian holy day of Sunday. Rather than

tokenizing accommodations of non-Christian holidays, such as releasing Jewish students

from class obligations during Rosh Hashanah, a postmodern critique of the dominant

Christian calendar in purportedly secular institutions might be more concerned with

institutionalized Christian privilege. A postmodern critique might ask why is changing

the Christian academic calendar not being debated? Why are token accommodation

gestures the offered solution, rather than a more equitable transformation of how time and

space are rationed and allocated? These kinds of questions are central to this dissertation research.

Prasad (2005) argues that postmodernism is dangerous to the status quo because it facilitates skepticism directed at typically uncritiqued totalizing and authoritative grand narratives. He offers examples of Darwinsism and Marxism as grand narratives, but more related to higher education I assert that the U.S. manifestation of free market capitalism, or even the Christian calendar discussed above, are relevant grand narratives. "Postmodernism challenges the cultural politics of modernist notions or rationality, norms, and identity" (Tierney, 1993, p. 4). The challenge of these norms is strengthened through the interdisciplinarity of postmodernism for it pulls from diverse fields and genres (Prasad, 2005).

Giroux (1991) provides some pragmatism to the discussion of postmodernism in higher education by asserting that postmodernism raises social and political questions and problems with the intention of re-envisioning and representing the boundaries of discourse and cultural criticism viewed through the lens of power as maintained and abused by hegemonic institutions and systems. Postmodernism aims to eliminate boundaries, for example between elite and popular culture, and between art and life (Crotty, 1998). Further advancing postmodernism, Derrida (1967) is famous for using postmodernism as a tool for deconstruction. Poignantly, postmodernism has helped articulate a critique of the structure of social phenomena such as language. For example the connotation of a dissertation "defense" implies conflict and adversarial debate as a rite of passage into the powerful professoriate. The dynamism of language, and the associated layering of meaning in symbols and words, can be seen as a process of

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deconstruction rather than construction (Derrida, 1967). Therefore deconstructing the

doctoral student socialization process using postmodernism is concerned with how power

is created and maintained (Ellis, 2001).

It is important to note that, "the postmodern tradition does not offer any kind of

social blueprint for an ideal or desirable society in lieu of what is being critiqued"

(Prasad, 2005, p. 222). Postmodernism is concerned with social productions, including

art, language, images, and discourse patterns (Prasad, 2005). More specifically,

postmodern scholars Foucault (1980, 1982) and Butler (1990, 2004, 2011) are interested

in the performance of social scripts related to gender. Giroux (1991) asserts that

"Postmodern feminism provides a radical social theory imbued with a language of

critique and possibility" (Giroux, 1991, p. 44). Offering a succinct postmodern critique

of the malleability of gender performance, Butler (1990) who is often labeled a

postmodern feminist, argues that "gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time,

instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts" (p. 179). A key focus

of postmodernism is challenging dichotomies and essentializing notions of identity, such

as heterosexual and homosexual, these concepts being relatively recent inventions

functioning to maintain boundaries of privilege (Foucault, 1980). Therefore de-

essentializing and opening space for a myriad of ways of performing and embodying

gender, sexuality, race, is of importance to postmodern scholars (Butler, 1990, 2004,

2011; Foucault, 1980, 1982).

Interestingly, there is largely a demographic homogeneity among seminal

postmodern scholars; an overwhelming whiteness and maleness is shared among most

scholars cited here. The implications of this homogeneity are beyond the scope of this

analysis, but must be acknowledged for it impacts the present study. Increasingly, women, people of color, and people with heterogeneous social identities are engaged in advancing postmodern scholarship.

      Critical theory. Due to the lack of concreteness of postmodernism, a combination of postmodernism and critical theory is used to guide this dissertation research. This theoretical amalgamation is not new in social science research, for postmodernism has deep connections with critical traditions (Prasad, 2005). Tierney and Rhoads (1993) argue that, "a rapprochement between critical theory and postmodernism is mutually beneficial theoretically, and in a practical sense offers those of us in higher education new ways to think about, and hence to act in colleges and universities" (p. 310). Critical theory focuses on individual reflexivity, the socially constructed nature of knowledge, and issues of culture and power combined with a goal of emancipation (Tierney & Rhoads, 1993). Therefore, "critical theorists seek to bridge the chasm between research and action, a chasm that they argue has been promoted by traditional positivist research" (Tierney & Rhoads, 1993, p. 323).

      Critical Theory has its roots in the Frankfort School which is associated with the Institute for Social Research at the Goethe University in Frankfurt, Germany (Abel & Sementelli, 2004). Most commonly the Frankfort School is credited with being founded in 1932 by Carl Grünberg and the theoretical leaning was Marxist (Abel & Sementelli, 2004). More recently, the Frankford School is frequently associated with the work of Jürgen Habermas (1987a, 1987b, 1990) and a focus on communication, logic, and intersubjectivity, or the shared meaning constructed by people in their everyday

interactions (Abel & Sementelli, 2004). Essential to critical theory is a critique of ideologies which explain uncritical adherence to capitalism and socialism (Prasad, 2005).

In critical theory, knowledge creation is mediated by power relations which are socially and historically constructed (Prasad, 2005). Due to this centralization of power, critical theorists are skeptical of experts, and of one dominate cannon of knowledge. Gramsci's (1929) "Organic Intellectual," represents a site of resistance to dominate notions of power. "Organic Intellectuals" are not typically professors or members of an elite ruling class, but rather all men [*sic*] can be intellectuals of power and influence (Gramsci, 1929). The concept of "Organic Intellectuals" has some connections to later presented leadership concepts of Grassroots or Servant Leadership.

Because critical theory requires a combination of social critique and praxis, it offers an avenue for postmodernists to take transformative action against oppressive forces (Prasad, 2005; Tierney & Rhoads, 1993). Critical theory is an attempt to understand the oppressive aspects of society in order to generate societal and individual transformation (Fay, 1987; Tierney, 1993). This understand comes in multiple forms, including narrative and anecdotal, making it a good match for the qualitative arts-based research method of educational criticism and connoisseurship used in this dissertation. Critical theorists are disparaging of the frequent marginalization of qualitative methods, labeling this dismissiveness an oppressive discourse closure (Prasad, 2005).

Like the seminal postmodern theorists cited above, many of the foundational critical theorists are also white men. "Although conducted as an intellectual project for the liberation of all humankind, critical theory's location in white male discourses means that it may well function as yet one more site of white cultural hegemony" (Brookfield,

2005, p. 274). Critical theory is preoccupied with class and largely ignores issues related

to race, gender, sexuality, or other social identities, perhaps due in part to the social

identities of the pivotal scholars (Brookfield, 2005). However it still has theoretical

utility for critical theory is different from traditional theory in that the former seeks to

change situations, and the latter merely reflects on situations (Crotty, 1998). Moreover,

critical pedagogy later presented in this dissertation during the literature review, a

concept related to critical theory, increasingly contains diverse scholars among its ranks.

   Critical postmodernism. These theories of postmodernism and critical theory

frame the anti-essentialist and subjective assumptions guiding this examination and

analysis of the literature with an intentional focus on how systems and institutions

function to perpetuate oppression symbolically, pedagogically, and structurally. Social

justice is grounded in critical theory, with an intentional concern for the status and

agency of people at the margins of society (hooks, 2000; Kincheloe, 2005). When

combined, postmodern and critical theories prescribe a relentless SJ commitment for

educational leaders, deemed by some as radical though necessary, given the tendency

toward the centralization and concentration of power in the hands of a few (Alinsky,

1971; Coté, Day, & du Peuter, 2007; Fanon, 1961; Freire, 2003).

   Critical postmodernism offers space for hope, for yearning, and for transformation

(hooks, 1990). "Resistance beings with people confronting pain, whether it's their or

somebody else's, and wanting to do something to change it" (hooks, 1990, p. 215). This

quote astutely demonstrates the advantage of combining postmodernism and critical

theory. It is useful as a frame for this research because it necessitates both confronting

pain, or oppression, and also taking action to change the conditions allowing or creating

the injury. Often research in higher education failing to use both postmodernism and critical theory is merely focused on describing and critiquing a condition, for example racism. Or, research is consumed with action, for example a student activities program aimed at raising awareness about issues most relevant to the LGBTQ community. Each of these research patterns, while myopically productive, are demonstrated and critiqued in the literature review to follow.

Critical postmodernism holds both identification and action as equally essential endeavors. A barrier to the utility of both postmodernism and critical theory is the often inaccessible jargon used to describe the frameworks. Tierney (1993) elaborates:

> Indeed, one curiosity of both theories is that they often seem immune to public discourses and to the development of a language that is accessible to individuals other than academics; at the same time, one of the key components of both ideas concerns engagement with that public. (p. 4)

It is my desire that this dissertation, and chiefly the narratives presented, represent an example of accessible social justice research farmed by critical postmodernism.

There are several tensions between postmodernism and critical theory. One key tension relates to the nature and possibility of the emancipation of oppressed peoples. Critical theory largely advances oppressed people reflecting on their social status in society related to power structures to inform changing an oppressive status quo (Fay, 1987; Tierney, 1993). Postmodernism does not typically focus on working within oppressive systems as a means for transformation, but is more likely the focus on problematizing the system. This position is brilliantly summarized by Audre Lorde's popular quote, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (Lorde, 1984, p. 112). Simply put, critical theory is concerned with acquiring effective tools to

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facilitate dismantling the house toward a more equitable structure, and postmodernism

wants to blow up the house and build from a new foundation.

Both theories, postmodernism and critical theory, and subsequently critical

postmodernism, are related to the conceptual frameworks of praxis and social justice

presented below. The Freireian (2003, 2005) concept of praxis is directly associated with

critical theory:

> Critical inquiry remains a form of praxis—a search for knowledge, to be sure, but always emancipatory knowledge, knowledge in the context of action and the search for freedom. It is in this mood of critical reflection on social reality in readiness to take action for change that critical researchers come to the tasks of human inquiry. (Crotty, 1998, p. 159)

Similar connections to these theories are found in the social justice concept used

throughout this dissertation. Therefore, these two theories offer a site for the educational

researcher to bridge the important systemic critiques of postmodernism with the more

tangible commitment of critical theory for socially just action.

Conceptual Frameworks

Praxis. Guided by the above theoretical framework, this examination is further

informed by two conceptual frameworks: praxis and social justice. First, the Freireian

(2003, 2005) concept of praxis, the combination of reflection and action aimed at

transforming oppressive systems, frames the trajectory of research. Freire (2003, 2005)

explains praxis through the concept of conscientização, translated in English to

conscientization, an ongoing process of evolution toward critical consciousness.

Specifically, conscientização is, "learning to perceive social, political, and economic

contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire,

2003, p. 35). It is important to note that the Freireian concept of praxis, informed by the

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work of Fanon (1952, 1961), focuses on the target of oppression engaging in praxis to change one's own condition. Fanon (1952, 1961) frequently uses the colonizer/colonized dichotomy to explain resistance to oppression as he inspires the oppressed to collectively struggle for liberation. Notably, Fanon (1961) identifies the imposition of a language as a tool of colonization, perhaps informing a similarity with the forced adoption of an academic language as part of a higher education socialization process.

Waiting for hegemonic systems, or people in substantial positions of authority, to categorically improve the condition of oppressed peoples is seen as unrealistic and undesirable under the concept of praxis. Therefore research concerned with how people with positional authority engage in social justice praxis in higher education is a delicate transference of conscientização. Freire (1970) asserts:

> It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors. The latter, as an oppressive class, can free neither others nor themselves. It is therefore essential that the oppressed wage the struggle to resolve the contradiction in which they are caught. (p. 56)

My use of praxis as a conceptual framework does not subscribe to a zero-sum view of liberation. The oppressed can be working toward freeing themselves while leaders with substantial positional authority can simultaneously be working and challenging their peers to aspire toward social justice goals while also creating conditions for students to engage in impactful activism. The concept of praxis is salient in this dissection of literature and the subsequent presentation of original research with the intention of challenging and reforming oppressive policies and practices in higher education.

Social justice. Second, the concept of social justice is salient as a frame for the review of literature. John Rawls (1971) is often credited with having introduced the

concept of social justice in the United States post-colonization, linking it to distributive justice focused on the equal distribution of goods and services. Later, scholars critiqued Rawls' concept, noting that distributive justice does not realize a true equitable allocation of resources (Fraser, 1996). Broader transdiscplinary conceptions of SJ that span the globe hold that "social justice has its roots in theological, political, philosophical, ethical, and jurisprudential conceptions about the nature of a fair and just society" (Singh, 2011, p. 482). The concepts of a fair and just society are largely informed by concepts of access, theoretical equality, and a level playing field. This early concept of social justice is therefore unsurprisingly linked to deficit-based thinking which focuses on the reallocation of resources, or capital, as a strategy for realizing equality-based goals. This does not represent the more equity-based social justice understanding used in this dissertation, with a focus on just access for true opportunity and active work to remedy oppressive systems. Nonetheless, the early conceptual of social justice and its link to Bourdieu is important to briefly explore.

Social justice is linked conceptually to Bourdieu's (2002) concepts of economic, social, and cultural capital. "Capital, which, in its objectified or embodied forms, takes time to accumulate and which…is a force inscribed in the objectivity of things to that everything is not equally possible or impossible" (Bourdieu, 2002, p. 26). Social justice has historically been concerned with the more equal allocation, acquisition, maintenance, and transference of capital. As social justice as a concept has evolved, so has the associated focus on privilege, power, and oppression in a socio-cultural and historical context. For example, social justice as a concept has advanced past aspirations of representational diversity, and is more concerned with issues of campus climate and

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equitable outcomes (Bensimon & Malcolm, 2012; Jayakumar & Museus, 2012; Pasque, 2010).

The concept of social justice, in part due to its' origins in experiential education, is frequently concerned with facilitating social justice learning experiences for participants in a group. The concept of SJ necessitates a critical reflection on the role of the facilitator, be it an SSAO or a student leader. Facilitation is by definition not presentation or lecture and therefore avoids the use of the Socratic Method (Birnbache, 1999). Rather, social justice facilitation is marked by co-constructing knowledge and helping participants authentically engage with and learn from each other rather than just the facilitator (Drennon & Cervero, 2002). In the process of co-constructing knowledge, a social justice facilitator must take inventory of how their own social identities impact the group learning experience, and how their behavior and rhetorical devices also inform the space (Brown, 2003; Drennon & Cervero, 2002; Ringer, 1999). Ringer (1999) warns of the common social justice facilitation pitfall of seeking approval or validation from the group, thereby centering the facilitator. Brown (2003) more specifically argues that the use of paraphrasing or summarizing participant responses causes the leader to fix or alter what was really said, a pattern problematic to creating a truly open and participant-directed SJ experiences.

Additionally, in a social justice facilitation setting if an activity or exercise is, "initiated by members of dominant social groups for those that are not members of dominant groups there is inevitably the risk that reflection will merely add to oppressive activities which exist and not expose or confront them" (Boud, 1997, p. 6). Facilitators must be attentive to the potential of a SJ experience, intended to identify and remedy

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institutional oppression, to replicate or reinforce the very same power structures it intends to deconstruct. "Given the contradictions and ironies inherent in democratic practice, facilitators must develop their own healthy skepticism toward the aims they seek to achieve and interrogate all practices for their effect on individuals and groups" (Drennon & Cervero, 2002, p. 195). Subsequently, some role-conflict may exist for a facilitator who has positional authority but societally marginalized identities (Drennon & Cervero, 2002).

Connecting praxis and social justice, concepts largely in agreement related to epistemological underpinnings, Freire (2003) asserts that SJ facilitators are socialized in a system "indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression," (p. 78) and must therefore actively fight to avoid colluding with the status quo. This fight must be unwavering, as momentum perpetuating the status quo is substantial. Understanding the role of SSAOs in creating, facilitating, designing, and implementing social justice initiatives, trainings, interventions, and policies resisting the status quo is of primary importance in this dissertation research.

The theories of postmodernism and critical theory highlighted above, when combined with conceptual frameworks of praxis and SJ, coalesce into a simultaneously nuanced and comprehensive frame for this dissertation research. *Figure One* presented at the beginning of the literature review chapter visually depicts the relationships between the theoretical frameworks, conceptual frameworks, and bodies of literature. The relevant bodies of literature, social justice and leadership, are highlighted below.

Positionality

Tatum (2003) presents an analogy of moving walkway in an airport which has explanatory power as I reflect on my positionality related to this research. I believe that one is either standing immobile on a walkway, being swept backwards by the overwhelming forces of oppression, walking steadily against the tide of oppression and therefore not progressing or retreating but maintaining the same position, the status quo, or one can be vigorously running, perhaps even sprinting, against the title wave of oppressive forces, therefore only then making progress (Tatum, 2003). Many people who have unearned privilege in society based on social identities bask in the bliss of ignorance related to privilege, power, and oppression on both individual and systemic levels. I have substantial identity-based privilege as a white, Italian/Sicilian-America, cis-gender, temporarily able, relatively heterosexual, non-Christian but benefiting from Christian privilege, educated, fit United States citizen with aspirations of becoming an SSAO. Rather than uncritically experiencing life unaware of the unearned privileges granted to me as a result of these identities, I intend for my uncompartmentalized personal and professional life to focus on identifying, challenging, and transforming oppressive institutions and systems. This struggle begins internally, disrupting the socialized supremacy which stems from these privileged identities and then unlearning internalized privilege. While engaging in critical self-work related to internalized privilege, I primarily engage in communities with people who share my privileged identities, my people, to help elevate a collective consciousness and subsequently responsibility for engaging in social justice activism. I believe this personal and political work requires

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public social justice engagement and research, of which I hope this dissertation is one example.

I intend for this dissertation research will fill a gap in the higher education literature related SJ leadership and praxis and will help me, and the field of education, sprint unwaveringly against the privilege, power, and oppression which is institutionalized, symbolized, circularized, pedagogicalized, and systematized in U.S. society therefore becoming the largely unproblematized master narrative replicating inequity. I am inspired by Lorde's (1984) assertion that poetry is the architecture of our lives, therefore in Appendix C I offer a positionality poem for additional context.

Any research with which I engage, particularly with social justice as a focus, necessitates specific strategies aimed at maximizing the largest possible impact to help facilitate change. I therefore anticipate this dissertation research will help inform ongoing training and development of aspiring and current SSAO's through the student affairs organizations NASPA and ACPA. I also intend to publish the results of this dissertation study in student affairs and/or higher education journals, I have presented the findings of this study at the 2014 national ACPA conference, and I hope to pursue other dissemination avenues including additional conferences and publication outlets.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This examination of the literature is timely and has utility because empirical research on SJ leadership practices is rare in education (Furman, 2012), even scarcer in higher education (Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Tooms & Boske, 2010), and virtually non-existent in student affairs (Fried & Associates, 2012; Chávez & Sanlo, 2013). A conceptual map is offered here, *Figure One,* to help demonstrate the relationships between theoretical frameworks, conceptual frameworks, and the bodies of literature overviewed here.
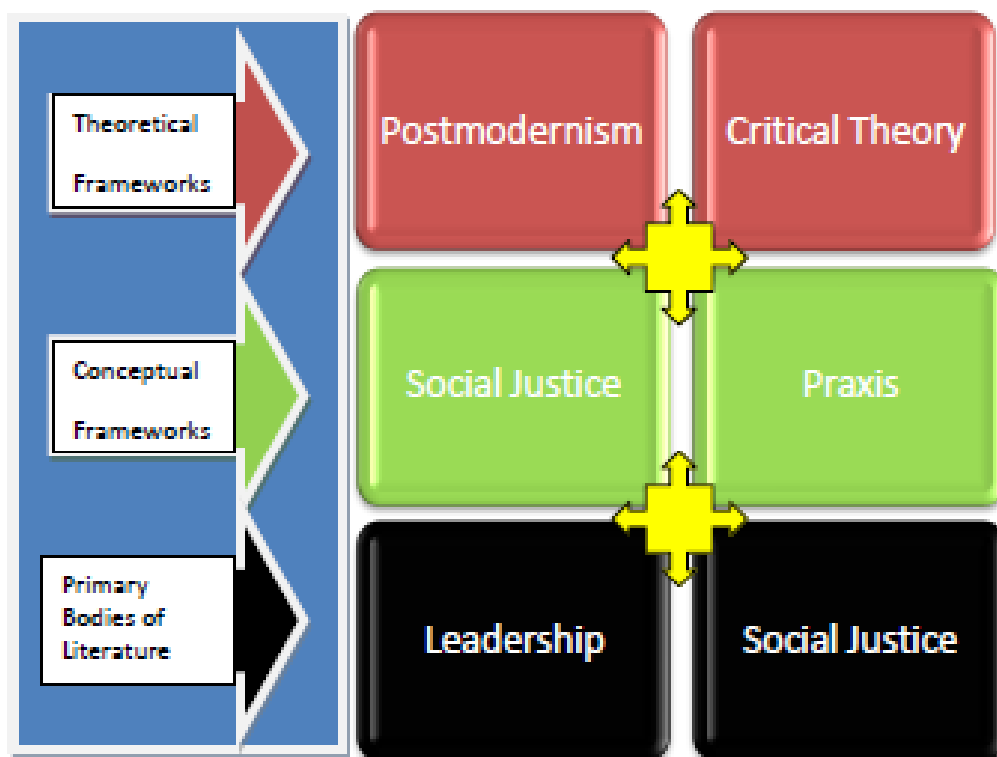
Figure 1. Conceptual map. This figure illustrates the relationship between frameworks and bodies of literature.

This conceptual map, though depicting frameworks in a liner top-down manner, is not meant to imply a hierarchy, for the frameworks more cyclically interplay to inform the bodies of literature and subsequent research. The yellow arrows pointing in all directions demonstrate the fluid interplay between the concepts. Using these frameworks, the first body of literature, social justice, is synthesized below. Relevant research related to the above research question, *How do Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs) enact, through leadership, social justice praxis?* is presented below, offering critiques of the exiting literature and identifying gaps.

Social Justice

Social justice is the first large body of literature for examination, guided by the following question catered to the social justice literature: *What scholarship about social justice leadership practices for praxis exist which is relevant to, or informative for, higher education, and specifically student affairs?* Social justice is often definitionally vague, inconsistently applied, and even used interchangeably with concepts such as diversity and equity (Brennan & Nadioo, 2008; North, 2006; Singh, 2011). "Concepts such as equity and social justice have received considerable policy attention within higher education…However, the concepts have a feel good flavour to them that can cover up the absence of precise meaning" (Brennan & Nadioo, 2008, p. 287). For the purposes of this literature review, the definition of social justice advanced by Adams, Bell, & Griffin (2007) is used:

> Social justice is both a process and a goal. The goal of social justice is full and equal participation for all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. (p. 16)

Among the many definitions of social justice available, this definition is selected because it focuses on SJ as both a process and a goal, something typically missing from many goal-focused definitions elsewhere. Also, the focus on the equitable, rather than a theoretical concept of equal, distribution of resources demonstrates an understanding that equal is not always fair or equitable, and allowances must be made for generational privilege, power, and oppression.

The social justice definition above from Adams, Bell, and Griffin's (2007) second edition of their edited practitioner-oriented volume explains the pedagogy, epistemology, and instructional practices of SJ as drawing specifically from Women's Studies, Queer Studies, and Ethnic Studies. Despite the comprehensiveness of the above referenced definition of SJ, some higher education scholars have advocated for a conception of SJ based on helping individuals exemplify an identity and take action as change agents:

> Our concept of social justice within education includes elements such as giving voice to particular groups' experiences, incorporating sociopolitical perspectives into dialog, reflecting upon and asking critical questions to motivate students to become culturally competent critical thinkers, and creating classrooms and educational environments where students feel intellectually and emotionally able to explore issues and topics. (Landreman, 2013, p. xiv)

The definition or conception of SJ germane for this research is one which is concerned with transformation of individuals, institutions, and systems in an effort to combat and reverse unearned identity-based privilege, embodied power, and systemic oppression. Identity-based privilege is the unearned social privilege granted to people on the basis of identities such as race or gender. Embodied power stems from Foucault's (1982) argument that power is exercised and not possessed, and the production of power can be repressive or liberating.

For example, an SSAO with positional authority, and perhaps educational authority stemming from a terminal degree, in some situations embodies power, for example a university president's cabinet meeting, yet this power can also be undermined, perhaps by someone outside of the higher education skeptical of academics. Finally systemic oppression relates to the history of oppression and the institutionalization of oppression. A higher education example includes the historical exclusion of people of

color in higher education, and how legacy preferences in admissions processes today

continue, stemming from this historic oppression of people of color, continues to largely

manifest this racial privilege.

Much of the literature about SJ, specifically as it relates to facilitation and

pedagogy, comes from experiential or outdoor education (Board, 1997; Brown, 2002,

2003; Ringer, 1999). This outdoor education literature provides a framework upon which

much SJ education builds, "many of the hands-on cooperative activities developed within

outdoor experiential education have made their way into social justice education"

(Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007, p. 26). Despite some theoretical, descriptive, and mostly

practice-based foundations for SJ, the current manifestation of the concept, particularly in

higher education, typically lacks an appropriate grounding in critical theory (Adams,

Bell, & Griffin, 2007; Gorski, 2006). Social justice as practices in higher education is

largely constructivist, yet epistemology and the associated limitations are infrequently

addressed or discussed. One intention of this research is to help deepen the conversation

about social justice in higher education using critical postmodernism.

Broad conceptions of social justice. Furman (2012) offers a succinct review of

the education literature related to social justice and subsequently proposes a conceptual

framework for social justice leadership as praxis pertinent for this review of literature.

Her model (See Appendix A) is designed to inform curriculum and pedagogy for

leadership preparation programs in primary and secondary education, and spans several

dimensions, the personal, interpersonal, communal, systemic, and ecological (Furman,

2012). Furman (2012) argues that:

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> Praxis has the potential to be a powerful, unifying concept in regard to leadership for social justice, because it captures both the reflection and action needed for such work, and furthermore, that this more detailed analysis of leadership as praxis can generate more creative thinking about leadership preparation pedagogy focused on social justice. (p. 193)

While the concept of praxis offers a potentially powerful and transformative framework, Furman (2012) finds that, "it has not yet gained much theoretical traction or broader play in the field [education] in regard to understanding the actual practice of social justice leaders" (p. 203). Therefore she argues that the central goal of education leadership preparation programs should be the development of capacity for reflection and action as a life-long engagement, a concept typically discussed abstractly and not concretely (Furman, 2012). This distinct focus on SJ and praxis is the primary tool for educational leaders to combat oppressive and unjust educational practices and replace them with equitable procedures and subsequently outcomes (Furman, 2012, p. 193).

The focus on praxis is further explicated in the related work of Freidman (1998), directly framed by postmodernism. She offers that it is necessary for SJ to be flexible and ever-changing if it is to be sustainable:

> The borders between sites of [social justice] surely exist, but just as surely they are and must be transgressed. They are not fixed in stone, but shift with changing cultural formations, conditions, and alliances. Upon this fluidity the survival and spread of [social justice] depends. (Freidman, 1998, p. 4-5)

A postmodern analysis of contemporary SJ is provocative and also cumbersome to tangibly use as a tool for informing specific SJ leadership trainings or practices, given the abstract nature of the concept. However an analysis of power on the individual and institutional level is essential in any postmodern analysis of SJ trainings and practices.

Goodman (2011), a social justice consultant and trainer in private and non-profit settings for more than two decades, provides a comprehensive and more practical review of best practices for working toward SJ with people who possess identity-based privilege, specifically white people. She astutely remarks that SJ educators or leaders cannot change people, but they can influence their potential for growth toward creating the conditions to combat institutional privilege, power, and oppression (Goodman, 2011). Goodman (2011) believes that education is organic, fluid, and contextual:

> Educating involves increasing knowledge, developing skills, raising consciousness, and enhancing critical thinking. Social justice education takes many forms in many contexts, from lectures in formal classroom…to policy presentations in conference rooms. (p. 4)

Goodman (2011) also cautions against a common pitfall for SJ leaders of proselytizing aimed at convincing people to adapt a SJ paradigm. The tendency for SJ leaders to use persuasion and at times coercion fails to recognize the necessity for people to individually identify a more intrinsic motivation for engaging in SJ work (Goodman, 2011). Rather, she offers that it is essential for SJ educators to model a holistic personal and professional commitment to SJ for others to replicate. However this modeling must be congruent, as others will identify inconsistencies and contradictions limiting or negating positive impacts of forming training or informal modeling through leadership (Goodman, 2011).

Social justice in higher education. Clarity about what social justice means in higher education is lacking, as a myriad of programs, initiatives, policies, and practices are situated beneath an encompassing and broadening umbrella of SJ (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008; Gorski, 2006, 2013; Singh, 2011). Some scholars argue that SJ may

become similar to diversity; an over-used and watered down buzzword meaning virtually

anything to anyone at a given time (Gorski, 2013; Patton, Shahjahan, & Osei-Kofi, 2010).

Singh (2011) argues that with a lack of clarity, SJ risks becoming politically malleable

and diluted, "The meanings and uses of social justice are becoming stretched in different

directions, depending on how policy goals are conceptualized and prioritized when

characterizing the nature of the challenging times" (Singh, 2011, p. 482). Due to the

increasingly broad definition of SJ, Singh (2011) encourages an intentional and critical

reflection for higher education about SJ:

> The challenging times in which we live could benefit greatly from a rigorous
> investigation of the conceptual, normative and strategic potential of the notion of
> social justice as currently invoked in higher education but also of the modalities
> being used to give expression to it and their accompanying ambiguities and
> rhetoricisms. (p. 492)

Gorski (2013) concurs in a short reflective essay, and he is further irked by the

appearance of a more recent concept lacking clarity and possibly having an adverse

impact on already entrenched SJ efforts, the new concept of inclusive excellence (IE)

presented and subsequently commodified by the Association for American Colleges and

Universities (Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005). Notably absent in all three

AAC&U papers proposing a movement called inclusive excellence is the term social

justice. Gorski (2013) argues that educators have spent substantial time and energy

articulating important differences between diversity, multiculturalism, and social justice,

and the new concept of inclusive excellence may function to further confuse and conflate

these terms and funnel energy and attention from activism to explaining the newest and

sexiest term. Because these words or concepts (equality, diversity, multiculturalism, SJ,

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and IE) are often used interchangeably (Brennan & Nadioo, 2008; Gorski, 2013; North, 2006; Singh, 2011), the concepts are presented in *Figure Two* for clarity.

Term	Equality	Diversity	Social Justice	Inclusive Excellence
Time Period	1954-?	1970s-?	1995-?	2005-?
Key Points	Stemming from *Brown v. Board*, equality is exemplified by aspiring toward equal numerical access, and equal educational outcomes regardless of race (Espinoza, 2007)	Advanced by *California v Bakke*, a racially diverse student body benefits all students (Patton & Hannon, 2008; Smith 2009). In the 1980s diversity became a buzzword (Berrey, 2011; Patton, Shahjahan, & Osei-Kofi, 2010; Perlmutter, 2010)	Social justice offers a focus on systems, representation and access as linked to power (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007)	Advanced by the AAC&U, IE holds that past and present racial inclusion initiatives have failed because of a lack of focus on changing institutions, and advocates for embedding IE principles throughout higher education (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005)

Figure 2. The (d)evolving language of inclusion. This figure shows the pro(de)gression of the language of inclusion. Adapted from Harris, J. C., Barone, R. P., & Patton, L. D. (under review). Who Benefits?: A Critical Race Theory Analysis of the (D)evoloving Language of Inclusion in Higher Education.

This figure shows the evolution, or devolution, and the general period of time when each concept received prominence in higher education. While words or discourse patterns have changed from equality to inclusive excellence, societal progress toward realizing social justice goals may not have pro(de)gressesd at the same pace.

Examining social justice initiatives on college campuses necessitates a discussion of climate and culture. Museus and Jayakumar (2012) delicately unpack the historical focus of higher education scholarship on climate, a static snapshot constructed via nebulous metrics, and culture, a more holistic concept contextualized historically. Cultural

assumptions hindering social justice institutional transformation toward equitable

outcomes include:

1) The natural occurrence assumption: It's the way we do things around here

2) The displaced responsibility assumption: If we offer it, they will come

3) The out of sight out of mind assumption: Everything must be ok

4) The specialization assumption: I have my job to do, and you have yours.

5) The incompatibility assumption: If we do this, it compromises excellence.

(Museus & Jayakumar, 2012, p. 17-20)

The culture of most institutions of higher education in the United States have Eurocentric

origins (Manning & Coleman-Boatwright, 1991).

> White culture also shapes the perspectives and behaviors that facilitate daily operations on college and university campuses. Also, White culture is manifest in the artwork, media, rituals, and other symbolic aspects of the campus cultures of postsecondary institutions. (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012, p. 9)

While the authors are talking explicitly about race and racial privilege, other social

identities may be accurately applied to the argument. Higher education leaders,

particularly those from European-American ethnic backgrounds, must actively work to

identify cultural hindrances and develop strategies to overcome these entrenched

paradigms to create the equitable educational outcomes all students deserve (Museus &

Jayakumar, 2012).

Specifically related to student affairs, Pope and Reynolds (1997) identify the

necessity for effective SJ student affairs practitioners to integrate comprehensive

multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills in leadership practices. Their work

functions as a call to action for student affairs professionals to engage in ongoing training

and self-awareness work as requirements for effective SJ practice (Pope & Reynolds,

1997). More recently, student affairs scholarship on SJ has explored the relationship

between SJ attitudes and actions as impacted by the social construction of identities and

cognitive development (Reason & Davis, 2005).

The well-intentioned social justice programming in higher education may be

reinforcing essentialism through cultural awareness events which function to "celebrate"

cultural and racial diversity on campus without an analysis of privilege, power, and

oppression (Goski, 2006). The critique of systems of oppression with a focus on

intersecting identities is essential in SJ engagement (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007;

Reason & Davis, 2005). Therefore popular awareness raising cultural events, often

labeled as SJ programming, such as the serving of ethnic food, cultural dance

performances, and events such as Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. celebrations, may function

to dilute the critical essence of SJ programming. Similarly, co-curricular SJ programs

such as one-time activities with students and simulations such as the popular "Tunnel of

Oppression" and "Privilege Walk" may perpetuate a deficit-based narrative of

communities of color and other historically marginalized (Gorski, 2006).   Each of these

programs, based in constructivist epistemology, focus on teaching people about privilege

through artificial experiences leveraging pathos. The first, "Tunnel of Oppression,"

involves groups of students traveling to different "rooms" where examples of oppression

based on social identities, for example sexuality, are displayed and sometimes directed at

the audience. One such room may involve gay slurs being directed at participants. The

"Privilege Walk," perhaps abelist given an assumption of mobility, involves reading a

series of statements related to privilege and people step forward if the statement relates to

them. Examples may include, "if you grew up in a home with more than 50 books." The statements function to stratify a group of people who begin the exercise standing in a horizontal line, often to the surprise to people with privilege and as expected for people with less social privilege. Both of these programs, typically labeled social justice programming, privilege the learning of people with privilege, often at the cost of marginalized groups to whom the activity are typically familiar.

The attenuation of social justice serves the interests of institutions by celebrating diversity without facilitating critical reflections on institutionalized privilege (Gorski, 2006; Nast & Pulido, 2000). Moreover, programming often under the SJ umbrella focused on simply presenting stereotypical cultural artifacts, what Gorski (2006) calls "Food, Festivals, and Fetish" programs, serve to make an institution feel it is making efforts toward diversity and inclusion, while undermining systemic SJ ideals.

Functional areas such as multicultural centers charged with focusing on diversity or SJ are caught in a double bind. "The concern is rooted in the institution's self-interest of being a 'better and more competitive' institution rather than in a social justice rationale" (Castagno & Lee, 2007, p. 5). The functional areas charged with implementing a social justice mission are often institutionally undermined via limited resources and token gestures of administrative support, serving to perpetuate a status quo rooted in equality (rather than equity) and a numerical or representational diversity agenda (Pasque, 2010). Even universities which espouse valuing diversity comprehensively typically fall short of creating a truly welcoming culture for all minoritized students (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012).

Critical pedagogy. A related body of literature, critical pedagogy, is examined framed by critical postmodernism and grounded by the above mentioned social justice literature. Of particular importance to this examination of literature are the critiques of the prevalence of neoliberal policies and practices in education, at odds with SJ. For decades scholars have been calling for critical pedagogy as a tool and site for resistance to a capitalistic educational hegemony (Apple, 2001; Banks, 1991; Darder, 2012; Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Giroux, 1997, 2007; Rendón, 2009; Tuitt, 2003). Giroux (1997, 2007), building off Gramsci's (1929) "Organic Intellectual" calls for educators to be public intellectuals who challenge the oppression of people outside of the dominant culture by creating a more democratic and equitable society. These public intellectuals, in schools and in larger society, "must struggle to create the conditions that enable students and others to become cultural producers who can rewrite their own experiences and perceptions by engaging with various texts, ideological positions and theories" (Giroux, 1997, p. 263). He specifically argues that much of the marginalization in society is perpetuated through the public school curriculum, and that education is highly politicized, whether acknowledged or not (Giroux, 1997).

An example of this marginalization perpetuated through the public school's using critical pedagogy can be found in Duncan-Andrade and Morrell's (2008) provocative appraisal of urban schools. Their emancipatory critique of the stifling impact of public school standardization, and the associated testing and curricular modification, offers critical pedagogy as a tool for resistance and liberation for students, teachers, and families in urban settings (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). In classical critical theory

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tradition, the text offers hope for transformation, which while not easy, can occur on small and eventually scalable ways to helps realize a more equitable educational system (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008). This can happen through the effective use of praxis and navigational strategies which teachers and educations can employ (Duncan-Andrade & Morrell, 2008; Freire, 2003).

Concepts of critical pedagogy and praxis are also presented in Santiago-Valles's (2005) critique of the critical gaps in Africana Studies as a disciplinary field. Santiago-Valles (2005) argues that praxis has been and continues to be an essential dialogic pedagogy which helps identify and critique the economic causes of social programs and directs solutions relevant for contemporary scholars of Africana Studies. Often reform in education and society fail to learn from historical activists who have achieved some social justice successes. Therefore and a respect for history is essential not only in Africana Studies but also across all higher education curricula (Santiago-Valles, 2005).

A notable international study using critical theory can also help inform the U.S. education literature. Romeru-Jeldres and Maturana-Castillo (2012) brilliantly use critical pedagogy to critique a new training program for professors in Chile. Their research involves the use of a questioner and focus group with professors (Romeru-Jeldres & Maturana-Castillo, 2012). A primary finding is that reflection on teaching practice is essential to achieve equitable learning outcomes for students (Romeru-Jeldres & Maturana-Castillo, 2012). Romeru-Jeldres and Maturana-Castillo (2012) argue that bridging theory and practices gaps is essential for effective educational leadership, a key tenant of critical theory and critical pedagogy.

Another critical pedagogy scholar, Steinberg (2001), agrees that theory and pedagogy must never be separate, for oppression in any form cannot be examined in an isolated context. Moreover, both theory and pedagogy are essential tools to help identity and dismantle oppressive powers (Steinberg, 2001). Power is nuanced and versatile and it becomes insidious and difficult to identify, therefore a critical theorist must be diligent and use all available tools to identify and critique oppression (Steinberg, 2001). For example, in public education the language of "standards" and "accountability" are being positioned as social justice aspirations designed to "help" low-income students and students of color. However, using critical pedagogy a critic may identify how this rhetoric is being used to justify exploitative educational practices which benefit private corporations, including testing companies and "non-profit" executives with growing compensation packages.

In a recent work Giroux (2007) asserts that there exists a trilogy of powerful forces shaping education which are at odds with libratory SJ; patriotic correctness, consumerism, and militarization, which combine to shape the current military industrial academic complex. Patriotic correctness is marked by unquestioned accommodation of the federal government in higher education, and predominantly the Central Intelligence Agency (Giroux, 2007). Changing higher education funding streams has resulted in a shift from largely unencumbered state funding to federal government resources in the form of directed research dollars dictating curricula and even pedagogy at odds with SJ (Giroux, 2007). Consumerism in higher education is seen throughout the academy, and notably in the tendency to reward university faculty and administrators for their

fundraising aptitude and success in bridging the worlds of academe and business rather than for their intellectual leadership or notable scholarship (Giroux, 2007). He further argues that faculty and administrators have become, "mere adjuncts to big business" (Giroux, 2007, p. 106). Giroux states that consumerism has dissolved any vestige of public good in higher education and the educational system now privileges private and corporate interests.

Finally, militarization is defined as the celebration of war and the associated values, practices, ideologies, social relations, and cultural representations in higher education (Giroux, 2007). Perhaps hyperbolic and intentionally fatalist as a tool to motivate, Giroux (2007) exclaims that:

> Militarization poses a serious threat to higher education, but, more important, it poses a danger to the promise of democracy at home and abroad, and to the very meaning of democratic politics and the sustainability of human life. (p. 81)

Giroux (2007) argues that the military is the most revered institution in the United States, successfully focused on maintaining permanent war. "Militarization views higher education as central to providing the identities, subject positions, knowledge, human resources, and legitimating ideologies that place it securely within the grip of the national security state" (Giroux, 2007, p. 209). He states that the 1960s and 1970s in the United States were marked by a resistance to militarization of higher education which has since faded, creating the current milieu of unquestioned perpetuation and expansion of the military industrial academic complex at odds with SJ efforts (Giroux, 2007).

Rendón (2009) persuasively calls for a consonant pedagogy, rooted in SJ, framed by participatory epistemology, and acted out by educational leaders engaged in ongoing

reflexivity. Her text challenges Western values of sectarianism and calls for an infusion of spirituality and what she calls a teaching and learning dream based on wholeness; or a pedagogic vision (Rendón, 2009). Shahjahan, Wagner, and Wane (2009) concur with this assertion that spirituality must be (re)centered for transformative SJ education to occur, calling for a decolonizing pedagogy as a tool to realize this end. Though not explicitly connected to spirituality, Coté, Day, and du Peuter (2007) in their activist anthology, argue that higher education needs a utopian theory and practice to challenge neoliberalism and to create socially sustainable alternatives to the developing new world order. Before a consonant, decolonizing, or utopian pedagogy can expand in higher education, one must acknowledge the insidious and perverse nature of hegemony and that, "All of us have invested much in the present status quo, and gain some rewards come from maintaining it" (Rendón, 2009, p. 148). Often, educational leaders are unaware of their collusion with the perpetuation of the status quo, "I do not assume that all leaders are conscious of the ways in which they/we perpetuate the status quo as the field of higher education often does not focus on educating ourselves and students about these issues" (Pasque, 2010, p. 188). Rendón (2009) poignantly contends that this perpetuation of the status quo, which has at some level functioned to help put educational leaders in their positions of influence, is killing the souls of many faculty and administrators in higher education.

Kincheloe (2005) argues that the first step in becoming a socially just educator is bravely seeing the oppressive practices inherent in schooling practices. Kincheloe (2005) envisions a critical pedagogy grounded in SJ which is primarily concerned with people

structurally oppressed in society. Most recently, Darder (2012) builds upon earlier scholars as she documents the negative impact of neoliberal policies facilitating what she calls an "economic Darwinism," stifling progressive scholarship, and calls for a critical pedagogy focusing on liberation from the hegemonic status quo. This liberation necessitates a revolutionary vision of human rights unwaveringly identifying and challenging neoliberalism (Darder, 2012). This vision of liberation, employed through social justice praxis, is an art masterfully performed by passionate educators who are self-aware, critical, and unwavering in their commitment to liberation from institutionalized oppression (Giroux, 1997; Landreman, 2013).

Critical pedagogy is constructed on the belief that education is inherently political (Kincheloe, 2005). Therefore Koncheloe's (2005) operationalization of critical theory develops a critical vision enabling unique insight into the politics of education in a systemic context. With such a systemic view of education, "we can being to reshape these relationships and the educational decisions we make in relation to them in new and previously unexplored ways" (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 7). It my hope that this dissertation similarly helps higher education scholars see effective social justice praxis in previously unexplored ways.

The literature on social justice, and more specifically critical pedagogy, represents the first large body of scholarship framing the analysis of SSAO social justice praxis. The primary gap identified in the SJ literature reviewed above is the absence of translating SJ principles into action on behalf of leaders in higher education. Simply put, there is a lack of demonstrated praxis in the literature. While some scholarship on policy,

programming, and training is presented, little work has been done on the tangible

implementation of SJ principles on specific leadership practices in higher education.

Presented below, the literature on leadership, in and outside of higher education, is the

second primary body of scholarship for this study, and is generally related to the

theoretical framework of critical theory.

Leadership

The second primary body of literature examined is leadership, guided by the

following question catered to the leadership literature: *What literature about leadership*

practices involving leading for the purpose of realizing social justice principles exists

relevant to a study in higher education and specifically student affairs? Calls for less

dictatorial and more collaborative and egalitarian leadership permeate the scholarship on

leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Greenleaf, Spears, & Covey, 2002; Heifetz, 2004;

Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Pearce & Conger, 2003) and in higher education specifically

(Kezar & Lester, 2011; Smith, 2009). Key literature relevant to this discussion includes

popular scholarship related to the organization and governance of higher education (Bess

& Dee, 2012; Cohen & Kisker, 2009). This prevalent literature, stemming from a largely

positivist paradigm, is contrasted with literature framed by a critical postmodern

theoretical framework. *Figure Three* below offers a succinct view of the epistemological

foundations for major leadership theories.

Macro - Theory	Trait	Behavioral/Situational	Social Justice
Epistemology	Positivist	Constructivist	Critical-Postmodern
Relevant Examples	Great Man (Clark & Clark, 1990); Charismatic (Weber, 1946)	Learning Partnerships Model (Baxter Magolda); Social Change Model (Komives, 2009); Grassroots Leadership (Kezar & Lester, 2011); Shared Leadership (Seers, Keller, & Wilkerson, 2003); Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 1970)	Tempered Radicals (Meyerson, 2001); Utopian (Coté, Day, & du Peuter, 2007); Social Justice (Marshall & Parker, 2006; Theoharis, 2004); Intersecting Identities (Chávez & Sanlo, 2013)

Figure 3. Evolution of leadership theory. This figure demonstrates the epistemological foundations for major leadership theories relevant to higher education. Barone, R. P. (2014). Unpublished figure.

Positivist, constructivist, and critical-postmodern are epistemological stances on which leadership theory is still commonly based today in higher education. However this dissertation research, framed by critical postmodernism, is most interested in leadership theory stemming from a critical or postmodern epistemology. This epistemological stance holds that what we know about leadership is a reflection of elites in society constructing a narrative or typecast of an effective leader, perhaps a "great man" born with traits valued by dominate society (Clark & Clark, 1990). Therefore new leadership theory, for example intersectional leadership (Chávez & Sanlo, 2013), intentionally subverts traditional power structures perpetuating a hegemonic mold of leadership and (re)creates a new mold reflective of traditionally subverted or oppressed groups of people as valid, valued, and celebrated.

The literature on leadership praxis most relevant to this study establishes the tendency for positional leaders to become complacent and fail to demonstrate a longitudinal and ongoing commitment to growth and learning, particularity related to the role of individual social identities and how these identities inform epistemologies and paradigmatic leanings (Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Landreman, Edwards, Balon, & Anderson, 2008; Reason & Davis, 2005). Leaders often fail to recognize that social and political systems are "indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression" (Freire, 2003, p. 78). Therefore leadership theories informed by critical postmodernism start with an acknowledgment of oppressive forces attempting to covert and subvert oppressed groups, and then work to challenge these hegemonic forces.

Kezar, Carducci, and Contreras-McGavin (2006) edit a comprehensive update to an earlier version of their text, reviewing advances in leadership paradigms, theories, concepts, and research relevant to education over the past two decades spanning several epistemological stances. Kezar, Carducci, and Contreras-McGavin (2006) celebrate a progression from positivism to, "social constructivism, critical, and postmodern paradigms [which] have made the context and process much more important to the study of leadership, meaning making, and power" (p. ix). They advance the concept of leadership as a multidimensional phenomenon which has:

> Moved from being leader centered, individualistic, hierarchical, focused on universal characteristics, and emphasizing power over followers to a new vision in which leadership is process centered, collective, context bound, nonhierarchical, and focused on mutual power and influence. (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006, p. ix)

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Kezar, Carducci, and Contreras-McGavin (2006) organize their text by theoretical, paradigmatic, and new leadership theory sections in a succinct and engaging manner with great utility for any scholar or higher education leadership.

A more general overview of leadership theory, with a specific focus on the Social Change Model (SCM) of Leadership and focused on undergraduate students, is presented in a volume edited by Komives, Wagner, & Associates (2009). The aim of this text is to help student affairs administrators develop nonhierarchical and responsibly inclined college student leaders using the SCM, though the text can be applied more broadly to student affairs professionals (Komives, Wagner, & Associates, 2009). Authors in the text assert that a leader should seek to avoid groupthink and engage in critical dialog (Cilente, 2009), embrace controversy as an opportunity to bring people together (Alvarez, 2009), and to act with congruency (Shalka, 2009). This accessible text can be used by students, staff, and faculty alike to spark provocative conversations about leadership and SJ in a higher education context.

Meyerson's (2001) Tempered Radicals uses data from hundreds of interviews in diverse employment sectors to understand strategies employed by people working within institutions seeking incremental change for SJ, involving specific practices such as leveraging small wins. The model resulting from this comprehensive study (see Appendix B) offers a continuum of behaviors employed by SJ change agents ranging from more passive strategies of resisting oppressive forces quietly while remaining authentically self-actualized to more active strategies such as organizing for collective action (Meyerson, 2001). The work of Meyerson has directly informed other studies,

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including the work of Kezar and Lester (2011) who use a comparative case study design to examine the nature of effective leadership in large organizations by studying 165 educational leaders. They use grassroots leadership literature to come, "To a conclusion similar to Meyerson's: that tempered, incremental, and evolutionary change is likely more successful than radical approaches in institutional settings" (Kezar & Lester, 2011, p. 26). Kezar and Lester (2011) draw an important distinction for tempered radicalism as different from grassroots leadership, "Tempered radicals are neither confrontational, campaigners, nor consensus oriented as described in the grassroots literature—instead they may use some combination of the styles but in more moderate ways" (Kezar & Lester, 2011, p. 32).

A novel contribution of the work of Kezar and Lester (2011) is the assertion that activism and grassroots leadership, as opposed to the more traditional, hierarchical positional leadership, are interchangeable. This assertion stems from a similar view also held by Meyerson (2001) which holds that activism in its myriad of forms as enacted by those with less positional influential on campus is typically marginalized (Kezar & Lester, 2011). Kezar and Lester (2011) propose a merging of the tempered radical and grassroots leadership frameworks to coalesce into a comprehensive and compelling model for SJ leadership in higher education, regardless of position:

> One of the most helpful contributions of Meyerson's (2001) study to our examination of grassroots leadership is that many of the components of being a grassroots leader are interconnected in the tempered radicals framework…Meyerson's framework offers a way to conceptualize all of the facets of grassroots leadership together and look at the interaction of these various component parts. (p. 39)

Kezar and Lester (2011) therefore assert that their study fills a gap in the education literature which illuminates the nuances of power dynamics in institutional settings, how power impacts leadership style, how grassroots leaders operate, and finally how academic capitalism impacts leadership on college campuses. Kezar and Lester (2011) argue that academic capitalism, historically informed by neoliberlism and manifesting today in "new managerialism" can be readily seen in the leadership decisions of higher education leaders in what they call a culture of corporatization. New managerialism refers to a shift away from policy and toward a private sector model of management concerned with cost-benefit analysis and quantifiable output measures such as enrollment or retention (Kezar & Lester, 2001; Peters, 2013). The identified response to this evolving academic hegemony focused on technocratic metrics and the commodification of higher education (Anderson, Barone, Sun, & Bowlby, in press) is the convergence of lower-level grassroots leaders and positional leaders working together to facilitate SJ change (Kezar & Lester, 2011).

Tempered approaches to leadership advanced by Meyerson (2001) and Kezar and Lester (2011) is contrasted by Coté, Day, and du Peuter (2007) who argue a more radical vision of SJ leadership praxis with sweeping and comprehensive revolution challenging the status quo is necessary to transform systems broadly and education specifically. Citing radical activists including Alinsky (1971), Fanon (1952, 1961), Freire (2003, 2005), Giroux (1997, 2007), Coté, Day, and du Peuter (2007) offer models of challenging hegemonic higher education practices through community and academy educational collaborations and resistance movements in the Frerian spirit. Given the reluctance for

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higher education to realize social justice aims over the last several decades while relying primarily on incremental change, perhaps a more racial commitment to social justice transformation is necessary. The next sections aim to further particulate the leadership literature, offering sections on K-12 education, higher education, and finally student affairs specifically.

Leadership in K-12 education. A brief review to some important students regarding leadership in the K-12 setting is informative as studies of the nature of these presented below are rare in higher education settings. Several recent studies have examined the SJ leadership strategies of primary and secondary school leaders, including principals, teachers, and counselors (Brooks, 2012; James, 2010; Marshall & Oliva, 2006; Singh, Urbano, Haston, & McMahon, 2010; Tooms & Boske, 2010). These studies are primarily concerned with the individual influence people with positional authority can have utilizing charismatic leadership skills and practices to inspire workplaces to change related to SJ.

Marshall and Oliva (2006) edit an engaging volume, qualitatively exploring social justice leadership in K-12 settings as exhibited by dozens of administrators and teachers. Stemming from their research, they call for revolutionary leadership strategies that transcend traditional views of class and distributive justice (Marshall & Oliva, 2006). Marshall and Oliva (2006) subsequently situate educational leaders into one of four areas of the Social Justice Leadership Matrix presented below in *Figure 4*.

A	B
Possess consciousness and passion for justice Possess the skills and knowledge to do the work	Possess the consciousness and passion for justice Lack the skills and knowledge to do the work
C	D
Lack consciousness and passion for justice Possess the skills and knowledge to do the work	Lack consciousness and passion for justice Lack the skills and knowledge to do the work.

Figure 4: Social justice leadership matrix. This figure compartmentalizes social justice leadership strategies into four quadrants.
Adapted from Theoharis (2004) by Marshall, C., & Parker, L. (2006).

The figure helps demonstrate that most leaders have either the consciousness and passion for SJ, or the skills and knowledge to do the work of SJ, but few have both of necessary these qualities for successful and long-term SJ leadership in educational settings.

Tooms and Boske (2010) edit a similarly captivating text concerned with K-12 educational leaders involved in critical self-study about how social identities impact and inform epistemologies and ontologies, and subsequently their leadership. In a related study Brooks (2012) argues that educational leaders are uniquely positioned to challenge hegemony toward more ethical and equitable school practice. He introduces the concept of "distributed leadership," a situationally bound fluid phenomenon of reciprocal exchange between leader and follower (Brooks, 2012). These detailed and comprehensive studies of K-12 leaders, utilizing a case-study format, offer a model for higher education scholars concerned with examining SJ leadership in higher education bound by specific institutions and divisions of student affairs.

A prominent primary and secondary school scholar, Theoharis (2008, 2010), has

devoted substantial time to researching the strategies employed by K-12 educational

leaders toward achieving social justice outcomes, specifically the success and retention of

minoritized and low socio-economic students. In a recent study, he collected data over

the course of an academic year via interviews, observations, and reviewing documents on

six principals who had demonstrated success in graduating students who were

traditionally marginalized in public school contexts (Theoharis, 2010). He states that:

> A reoccurring theme from these schools and from the literature on school change
> is that exemplary leadership helps create the necessity for change and helps make
> the realities of change happen. (Theoharis, 2010, p. 331)

The primary research aim was to identify and describe the strategies these educational

leaders used to disrupt school injustice. Theoharis (2010) found that increasing staff

capacity for social justice is essential for implementing a sweeping equity agenda, and

that, "creating a climate that deeply values racial, cultural, and economic diversity is a

key strategy to enacting justice" (p. 331). His research offers a compelling qualitative

description of specifics of educational leadership for social justice. One overarching

commonality among participants is that, "They 'broke the silence' and narrated how they

worked to disrupt injustice. Within this work, they brought to life social justice

leadership" (Theoharis, 2010, p. 369). Studies of SJ leadership in higher education

similar to the one presented above are rare in the literature, and represent a notable gap.

Leadership in higher education and student affairs. The role of student affairs

leadership on college and university campuses has expanded throughout the twentieth

century, though with much labor and concern. In 1972 Penney dramatically states that

student personnel (student affairs) in higher education was a "profession stillborn," and asserts:

> Few occupational entities have devoted as much energy to self-examination and attempts at self-definition as has the amorphous body calling itself student personnel work. The specialty is roughly half a century old, surely time enough to achieve whatever degree of recognition and maturity the academic community is likely to bestow. It is certainty time enough for it to establish itself as a profession among professions, if it is ever to do so. In that same half-century or less, a score or more new specialties have been born, matured, and become professionally established in the world of academe…Student personnel workers, their philosophy, and their goals are not among the major influences today in colleges and universities. (p. 5)

More empirically, and perhaps productively, Lovell and Kosten (2000) synthesized 30 years of research relating to successful student affairs administration using meta-analysis techniques. The findings suggest a successful student affairs administrator has skills such as: administration, management, human facilitation skills, knowledge of student development theory, aptitude in functional responsibilities, traits of personal integrity, and cooperation skill (Lovell & Kosten, 2000). The researchers noted possible additional skills necessary including: diverse knowledge bases, awareness of relevant technology, assessment skills, political skills, and postsecondary public policy knowledge (Lovell & Kosten, 2000). The research of Lovell and Kosten (2000), functional a meta-review, demonstrates that much energy has been devoted in the later part of the nineteenth century to quantifying the necessary skills for a successful student affairs administrator. Therefore while it is likely erroneous to assert today that student affairs is a "profession stillborn," additional work specifically understanding effective leadership of student affairs professionals is needed.

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A unique case study and grounded theory research project on a large public institution in the southeast United States was conducted by Macchio (2012) examining the role of leadership and culture change in a division of student affairs. Macchio (2012) argues that the ability of a leader to foster change and improvement is dependent upon one's ability to impact the organizational culture:

> The factors that influence culture and the organization's ability to learn are interconnected. Each factor influences the other, making influences on organizational learning difficult to precisely identify. For instance, the external environment can create pressure on an organization to change and it can also affect the leader's style, organizational structure, and ability to make data-driven decisions. Culture shifts that result in increased organizational learning may be created by both individual factors and the unique interactions of these factors within particular contexts. (Macchio, 2012, p. 113)

In the findings of the study Macchio (2012) identifies five areas that can assist future and current leaders in fostering organizational change, particularly relevant for SSAOs. These five areas are:

> An intentional entrance into the organization by the leader, seeking to first understand the culture before making changes, the ability to apply consistent pressure to encourage change, provide transparent communication and opportunities for feedback, and constant monitoring of the organization. (Macchio, 2012, p. 114)

While the study focuses only on one institution, and lacks any explicit social justice analysis, findings greatly contribute to the body of knowledge related to leadership in student affairs.

The role of administrators in higher education in teaching students how to engage with SJ activism is the focus of a provocative essay by Markowitt (2009). In her short piece, she asserts that it is the role of administrators to teach students how to "do" activism (Markowitt, 2009). She addresses the complexities of teaching students to

effectively participate in activism, albeit at times lacking drama and excitement, directed

at an administration to which she belongs:

> That's my role, after all: to get a student to think about what she may want to achieve, and to follow through. It may not be as exciting as demonstrating, but volunteering for committee work is a more direct way to influence policy on my campus. It could be argued that such work is more strategic, even if it is a more tedious and solitary form of activism. (Markowitt, 2009, p. 3)

The moment of realization that her role as an activist is to teach students savvy strategies

to "take down the man," when as an administrator herself she represents "the man,"

causes her dissonance stemming from positional reconciliation (Markowitt, 2009).

Related to power and communication, Pasque (2010) conducted a unique study

related to SJ leadership when she critically analyzed the discourse patterns of a

professional higher education organization. She observed conference proceedings from a

notable higher education organization focused on research, and concludes that more

diverse voices addressing SJ issues are essential for higher education.   Pasque (2010)

argues that:

> Higher education leaders need to create a climate where power brokers foster space for alternative visions around social justice and educational equity…Such a change in climate would also require a shift in the social balance and institutional discourse so that people with alternatives cognitive process models, who directly address issues of power and privilege in the US system of higher education as related to issues of race, gender, and class, are centered. (p. 174)

Like Giroux (2007), Pasque (2010) encourages the use of notions of the public good to

advance a more liberatory SJ agenda.   Similarly, Gildersleeve, Kuntz, Pasque and

Carducci (2010) argue that the public agenda is increasingly used to perpetuate the

conservative modernization of the academy and subsequently call for more critical

perspectives to (re)claim and (re)construct the public agenda in higher education as one

concerned with interrupting privilege, power, and oppression. Perhaps this call for more critical perspectives coupled with the concept of learning leader as a cultural manager marked by humility and visibility in commitment to ongoing learning and improvement is advisable to realize SJ goals (Schein, 1992). Constant critical reflection on individual leadership practice, particularly social justice efforts, is essential as leaders tend to, "have well-articulated theories of their own about how groups should work, and they tend to select as colleagues and subordinates others who they sense think like them" (Schein, 1992, p. 226). Finally, Pasque (2010) finds that higher education leaders are reluctant to position themselves as SJ leaders, particularly those with identity-based privilege, therefore our leaders need training and expectations of challenging an oppressive status quo on an ongoing basis.

SSAO position in higher education. Even before the first dean of student position appeared in U.S. higher education, college presidents in the 15th and 16th centuries engaged in what Shaffer and Martinson (1966) call an, "exaggerated type of student personnel service, concerned primarily with students' pious behavior and their diligent attention to studies" (p. 3). However college presidents largely dealt with all student affairs related issues well into the nineteenth century (Smeaton, 1982). The first deans of men (and later women) appeared in the late 1800s, "during a period in which colleges and universities were characterized by tremendous expansion of student enrollment, increased organizational complexity, and heightened impersonalism" (Smeaton, 1982, p. 16). These deans, who typically came from the faculty ranks, largely focused on student discipline and interpersonal counseling (Smeaton, 1982; Westfall, 2006). These early

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deans of student's also typically lived on campus and were seen as acting in place of students' parents, or in loco parentis (Westfall, 2006).

The very first SSAO was a young English instructor at Harvard who was in 1891 promoted to Dean of the College at Harvard, LeBaron Russell Briggs (Brown, 1926; Sandeen, 1991). While historical records are not clear, the first Dean of Women, may have been Dean Adelia Johnston at Oberlin College around 1900 (Fley, 1978; Sandeen, 1991). However it was Marion Talbot who functioned the most like a current dean of students when she took the role of Dean of Women at the University of Chicago around 1900; and she organized the first national meeting for deans of women in 1903 (Fley, 1978; Sandeen, 1991). By 1910, most colleges had followed the lead of Harvard and the University of Chicago by appointing deans of men and women (Sandeen, 1991). The gender specific deans however had mostly disappeared by 1950 when deans of students appeared on the same campus in co-educational institutions (Westfall, 2006; Sandeen, 1991).

> More recently deans of student positions have again changed:
> Dean of students positions have frequently evolved into or added vice president titles. This change is reflective of the increasing complexity of the work and the importance of the role in institutional decision making. (Westfall, 2006, p. 11)

The title change to vice president marks more contact with university presidents and more influence over the entire operations of higher education institutions (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2004). The SSAOs with increasing power and influence on campus find themselves often pulled between diverse constituencies, while always remembering that they are at-will employees who could be let go by the president at any time (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2004). Nonetheless, SSAOs have always been assertive as needed,

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including James Lyons, the former Dean of Students of Haverford College who shares, "I have a responsibility to argue with the president, to check the president, to disagree with the president, to inform the president. You don't disagree publicly, obviously, but behind closed doors, the president could count on me to challenge him" (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2004, p. 354). M. Lee Upcraft, a higher education scholar and SSAO most recently at Pennsylvania State University shares, "I discovered that marching into a meeting and confronting the president, provost, or dean didn't work. You work behind the scenes; you work on individual people who have some power and influence" (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2004, p. 354). Wolf-Wendel et al. (2004) attempt to be balanced in their largely universal celebration of SSAO's of the 1950s and 1960s when they note that some deans of men in the 1940s and 1950s resisted integrating racially and religiously discriminatory historically white fraternities while simultaneously noting that overall deans of women have been more progressive than deans of men (Syrett, 2009).

SSAO leadership in higher education. If student affairs professionals, including SSAO's, need a student affairs background to be successful has been debated for most of the first two centuries of U.S. higher education (Boloand, 1979; Penney, 1972). To help answer this question, in 1991 Wade (1993) surveyed 480 student affairs administrators, just less than half who were Chief Student Affairs Officers (CSAO's). The survey participants, 60% of whom were men with a mean age of 42 (no other demographics, such as race, were reported), reveal the following personal characteristics necessary for CSAO success: adaptable, considerate, cooperative, dependable, energetic, impartial, loyal, open-minded, sincere, and well organized (Wade, 1993). Interestingly, Wade

(1993) found no relationships between age, degree attainment, or gender in terms of the personal characteristics necessary to be successful CSAO's, supporting the assertion that a student affairs graduate program preparation in no required for SSAO success.

No published studies specifically researching SJ leadership for praxis in higher education by SSAOs could be found through an exhaustive search of the literature. Studies focusing on the role of the SSAO position in higher education are also limited. Exceptions include examinations of the role and function of the SSAO position at the beginning of student personnel work in U.S. higher education (Mathews, 1915; Mueller, 1961; Sandeen, 1991; Williamson, 1949), and unpublished dissertation research (Edwing, 2011; Jones, 2009; Rodkin, 2011). Edwing (2011) uses a survey returned by 713 student affairs professionals to quantify the differences in leadership practices, as perceived by supervisees, using independent variables of race, gender, level of current position, age, and highest degree earned. Jones (2009) employs a single case study design to examine the substantial resource investment on behalf of colleges and universities in seeking and training SSAOs, implying a deficit of needed leadership skills for success in the position. Sandeen (2000) uses a case study approach to study leaders in higher education, and concludes among other things that "Student affairs administration, like leadership in any organization, remains an art, and there is no single method of learning about it that will result in improvement" (Sandeen, 2000, p. v). In one of the few studies directly focusing on U.S. community colleges, Rodkin (2011) examines community college SSAOs through a survey returned by 308 leaders in an attempt to establish if and how the most critical job skills for success as quantified by the American Association of Community

Colleges (AACC) are realized (American Association of Community Colleges, 2005).

Rodkin's (2011) findings demonstrate the effective use of some, but not all, of the AACC

identified skills. Finally Steward and Williams (2010) interviewed 19 SSAOs related to

the depth of their knowledge of essential financial and budgetary skills revealing little

SSAO preparation for success in the examined areas.

As most SSAOs report to college and university presidents, their perceptions of

SSAO leadership skills and competencies are important and illuminating. Bollheimer

(1982) uses a stratified sample of 480 college or university presidents to determine

presidents' perceptions of the key issues and skill set needed for SSAOs. The survey data

revealed student retention, financial aid, and future enrollment needs as the three primary

issues which presidents feel SSAOs should be engaged (Bollheimer, 1982). President's

who participated in the study were most likely to indicate that SSAOs are poorly prepared

to handle issues related to enrollment and financial aid, and Bollheimer (1982)

subsequently calls for better training in these areas. A similar study a decade later used

data from 149 presidents at four-year institutions (Randall & Globetti, 1992). Results

from this study found that the presidents participating in the survey were most likely to

identify personal and interpersonal skills as the most important competency for SSAO's,

followed by integrity, commitment to institutional mission, conflict resolution skills,

decisiveness, and motivation (Randall & Globetti, 1992). These two similarly designed

studies with divergent findings may indicate the evolving nature of the SSAO position, or

perhaps that institutional context is a large factor in determining the desired skill set and

competencies of these institutional leaders. Also notable is that both studies, with a

combined 629 college or university presidents, did not reveal issues related to student diversity, social justice, or creating an inclusive campus climate as top priorities.

Published research on SSAO leadership tends to have a particular demographic focus examining women (Montgue, 2011; Santoveck, 2007; Tuttle, 1996), people of color (Hammonds, 2012; Santoveck, 2010), and community college leaders (Rodkin, 2012). Published studies concerned with SSAO leadership related to diversity have a retroactive bend, focusing for example on the U.S. Civil Rights era (Wolf-Wendel, Twomply, Tuttle, Ward, & Gatson-Gayles, 2004). When not focused on history, studies on leadership in student affairs tend to uncritically examine traditional notions of leadership. Guido-DiBrito, Chavez, Wallace, and DiBrito's (1997), study using interviews of four SSAO's to determine their loyalty to university presidents, and Jones' (2011) documentation of the proliferation of interim appointments of higher education administrators are emblematic of this trend.

In 2011 Dickerson et al. engaged in a research project which surveyed SSAOs and faculty related to perceptions of professional competencies of new student affairs professionals. Their findings from 99 SSAOs and 43 higher education faculty members reveal significant differences in perceptions of competency in the areas of fiscal management, planning, assessment, the application of theory to practice, critical thinking, collaboration, conflict management, and written communication. Specifically, faculty perceived a greater gap in new professionals' knowledge of diversity-related issues and their commitment to social justice, whereas SSAOs saw more significant gaps in their ability to use current and future trend data as well as their ability to apply theory in

practice (Dickerson et al., 2011). This study of new professionals is relevant to the current research on SSAOs given that most SSAOs were new student affairs professionals and were trained in the associated graduate preparation programs.

Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, Tuttle, Ward, and Gatson-Gayles (2004) interviewed dozens of current and former SSAO's about their experience leading their divisions of student affairs during the 1960s and 1970s during a time of civil strife in the United States. Their collection of essays reveal administrators who navigated conflicting demands between students, other administrators, university presidents and trustees, the general public, and their own personal views on the Civil Rights struggle of the time (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2004). They document the historical role of deans of students in advocating for students' civil rights spanning racial integration in the 1920s-1950s, to challenging punitive disciplinary views of in loco parentis in the 1960s (Wolf-Wendel et al., 2004). Concluding their collection of essays, Wolf-Wendel and colleagues (2004) share an important reflection with SJ implications which deserves quotation at length:

> Merely having a certain number of students of color on a campus would not, in and of itself, provide an environment that was conducive to the success of those students. Providing access to historically underrepresented student groups is only a first step. Student affairs administrators learned that creating a positive campus climate requires several components. Change, they suggested, must begin at the individual level, with student affairs professionals educating and sensitizing themselves to issues of diversity, privilege, and difference...perhaps most importantly they learned that the successful integration of campuses involved more than just offering a smattering of diversity-related programming. It required transforming the entire campus climate to one that is supportive of students from diverse backgrounds and perspectives---an opportunity and challenge that continues to this day. (p. 397-370)

Ensuring inclusive and welcoming campus climates for all students remains an elusive goal for student affairs leaders today.

Hartley (2001) conducts one of the only studies designed at explicitly researching conceptual frameworks used by SSAO's. The study uses qualitative inquiry to explore the perspectives of 16 SSAOs (all but one from the New England region) for their use of student learning as a framework for their work. Structured by a national shift toward public accountability in higher education, Hartley (2001) finds that the work of student affairs is largely unchanged despite pubic calls for transparency and efficiency in student services. This finding is somewhat surprising given the tendency for student affairs functions such as support services to be seen by college presidents, boards of trustee's, and the general public as expendable and not essential in times of fiscal scarcity. "When institutions are required to make difficult choices, the implications are clear---programs that are not seen as central to the institutional mission are in grave peril" (Hartley, 2001, p. 232). A study today, more than a decade after Hartley explored 16 SSAOs in 2001, may reveal that student affairs is no longer unchanged given the pervasiveness of neoliberalism and the new managerialism. For example, today's SSAOs are increasingly under pressure to expand enrollment while simultaneously meeting performance metrics such as graduation which are now more frequently tied to state funding structures. Notably, performance based funding mandates are typically seen to have a null impact on graduation rates, their purported function (Tandberg & Hillman, 2014). The research presented here illuminates the pressures SSAOs face as a result of neoliberalism and the new managerialism.

Similar to Hartley's (2001) study, Ender, Netwon, and Caple (1996) surveyed 560 SSAOs to identify which student affairs philosophy guided the work and resources in

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their divisions of student affairs. The results reveal three primary philosophical models

of operation: First a focus on student services or extracurricular engagement, identified

by 50% of the SSAOs in the sample; second student development or a focus on the

developmental phases for growth of student, identified by 20% of the SSAOs; and finally

student learning or an intentional focus on learning outcomes and creating an academic

climate, identified by 16% of the SSAOs (Ender, Netwon, & Caple, 1996). Like the

Hartley (2001) study critiqued above, the study highlighted here may be similarly

antiquated given the expanding influence of neoliberal polices in higher education and

the associated impact on the job pressures for SSAOs.

Of all of the literature on the SSAO position, perhaps one of the oldest

contributions is still the most useful to contextualize the current manifestation of the

position. Sandeen (1991) using largely his personal experience as an SSAO identified

four primary roles of these campus leaders: leader, manager, mediator, and educator. He

asserts that SSAOs exist for the education of students and:

> They should be the most articulate, informed, and persuasive advocates for
> students' education on their campuses. Their success is a function of their
> leadership capacity, and of their ability to understand and gain the confidence and
> support of a number of constituent groups…Their major responsibility is to do
> everything they can to make their colleges work for the education of their
> students. (Sandeen, 1991, p. 222)

This synopsis of the philosophy of the SSAO position more than two decades ago

continues to be appropriate. Working for the educational of all students, with a social

justice focus, is laudable and possible for higher education leaders:

> Student affairs educators have the capacity to profoundly influence the initiation
> and fulfillment of multiculturalism within their areas of responsibility as well as
> throughout the campus as a whole. Through management of major programs on

campus…profound influence on the choices of university symbols…and input, if not decision making, about cultural representation in everyday campus life…student affairs staff have significant windows of opportunity to influence and shape a multicultural campus environment. (Manning & Coleman-Boatwright, 1991, p. 373)

However this window of opportunity does not always, or frequently, translate into meaningful change for equity in environment or educational cultures or outcomes.

Of all the literature on SJ leadership in student affairs, two pieces most directly relate to the research question, *How do Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs) enact, through leadership, social justice praxis?,* and frameworks guiding this dissertation; the 2011 volume edited by Dungy and Ellis, *Exceptional Senior Student Affairs Administrators Leadership*, and the 2013 text exited by Chávez and Sanlo, *Identity and Leadership.* Dungy and Ellis' (2011) thesis is that in light of decreasing funding in higher education from state and federal governmental resources, SSAOs should focus on providing excellent and cost-effective programs and services. They argue that SSAOs need to have a diverse skill set and well-informed views on a myriad of issues including politics, student development, legal regulations, and student affairs (Dungy & Ellis, 2011). Dungy and Ellis (2011) enlist the voices of current and past SSAOs to expand on these themes related to the evolving role of student affairs leadership in higher education. Increasingly, SSAOs are fundraisers, and while faculty remain the foundation of higher education, the role of the vice president for student affairs is expanding and subsequently becoming more essential to the high-level operations of colleges and universities (Dungy & Ellis, 2011).

One SSAO (Hulme, 2011) reflects that budget reductions, hiring freezes, layoffs, furloughs, and increasing tuition and fees which were seen at virtually all colleges and universities from 2008-2011. Hulme (20111) labels this short period of time as one of the most turbulent in the history of the SSAO position. Laws (2011) concurs:

> The increasing complexity of global economies and issues, rapidly changing priorities and initiatives, the ever-shifting resource base, and security issues make the administrator's role different than it was in the past. Senior student affairs officers must learn to think and act entrepreneurially, instilling the vision and providing the leadership for activities, programs, policies, and services that will enhance student success. (p. 71)

This entrepreneurialism is echoed by Sullivan (2011) who references the increasing climate of accountability in higher education where policy makers expect greater quantification of outcomes in an increasingly neoliberal economic model of success. The neoliberal technocratic language can be seen in the reflection below:

> In my 24 years as a senior student affairs officer at several research-intensive public North American institutions, the most pronounced and demanding shift I have experiences is the movement from profession-centered program models that address student needs to highly accountable and shared program arrangements directed toward student success and institutional strategic aims. Planning, delivery, and assessment in this emergent model require deep links with the expertise of clients…and a belief in the wisdom resident in those client groups. (Sullivan, 2011, p. 93)

This language of cost-benefit analysis, client/customer satisfaction, and accountability reflect a profound, and likely permanent, change in U.S. higher education toward quantitative measures for success (Dungy & Ellis, 2011).

Other SSAOs highlighted by Dungy and Ellis (2011) speak more directly to the positional politics and at times competing demands related to student advocacy. Heffernan (2011) succinctly offers:

Successful student affairs leaders understand that it is not about 'advocating for students'; instead, it is about being able to articulate student issues and concerns and identifying, for the president and board, how a decision will impact the ability of students to successfully graduate. (p. 118)

This understanding, balancing an at times righteousness in student advocacy which is often counterproductive politically, is a theme in the narratives by SSAOs, for example Heffernan (2011) continues:

There have been times during my career when I did not shy away from espousing my perspective and seizing whatever platform was available to champion my cause. I took great pride in proclaiming myself to be a student advocate, which, to me, justified being reckless. This perspective and the leadership style that follows from it are not compatible with success as an SSAO. (p. 129)

With career maturity Heffernan (2011) reflects on student advocacy by recounting the need for humility, diplomacy, and thoughtfully calculated leadership as a necessity for remaining effective, and employed, as an SSAO. Another SSAO concurs with this assessment, and highlights the importance of optimism in SSAO leadership:

As higher education embarks on a new decade of unceasing pressures, SSAOs must adopt or renew a brand of leadership that is marked by unwavering hope and optimism. Staff and students alike will look to the SSAO to provide a vision for a better future, inspire the human spirit, and move their division in a strategic direction. Now more than ever, higher education needs leaders who will rise above the urgency of the day and provide a tough-minded pervasive hope. (Dungy & Ellis, 2011, p. 254)

This optimism and the ability to translate hope throughout divisions of student affairs will increasingly become a job requirement for successful SSAOs in a climate of economic strife and higher education accountability to constituencies inside and outside of the college or university (Dungy & Ellis, 2011; Heffernan, 2011).

Chávez and Sanlo (2013) offer an expansive volume from a cross-section of student affairs leaders who authentically reflect on how social identities inform and

manifest in their practice of leadership. Each carefully selected narrative vulnerably

reflects on personal identities, demonstrating the kind of self-actualization necessary for

consistent and congruent SJ leadership. For example Kruger (2013) offers that student

affairs professionals must, "learn about the lives, challenges, opportunities and concerns

of those whose identity experiences are different from our own. To do this, we must first

conduct a personal inventory of our biases and privileges" (p. X). This personal

reflection is essential prior to truly unpacking how identities influence the more systemic

operationalization of power and privilege in systems and power structures, as explained

by Chávez and Sanlo (2013):

> As individual leaders, we practice within norms, assumptions, values, beliefs, and
> behaviors originating in our multiple identities. These identities influence
> transformative efforts, innovations, and limitations we experience as leaders. In
> addition, identity influences experiences and perceptions of power or lack thereof
> and affects how we think about and practice power structures of colleges and
> universities. (p. 3)

Hong (2013) expands this notion of thinking about power structures to make some

nuanced connections with actual leadership practice:

> To effectively leverage my decision-making authority and influence, I must
> constantly be present in the moment, thoughtful, and self-critical—always
> scanning the organizational context and identifying ways in which power and
> privilege manifest in interpersonal and systemic dynamics and then ensuring that
> patterns of disempowerment and marginalization do not continue…When power
> is judiciously used and tempered with integrity, inclusion, courage, and
> transparency, powerful people joining together to create powerful teams can
> generate positive, transformative outcomes for students. (p. 51)

These desired transformative outcomes can only occur if higher education leaders

identify a sense of responsibility for action for the social good which comes from identity

awareness (Garay, 2013). Near the end of the volume, Foster (2013) reminds higher

education administrators that all decisions are political and influenced by both personal and professional identities.

Taken together, these two recent texts (Chávez & Sanlo, 2013; Dungy & Ellis, 2011) represent pieces that when combined help fill the primary gap identified in this literature review, though without a specific lens of critical postmodernism. Therefore this synthesis and analysis of the literature demonstrates the need for novel research to respond to the lack of attention given to critical projects examining the SJ leadership activities of SSAOs. Studies on leadership in higher education and student affairs typically fail to use a critical postmodern lens for critiquing or exploring SJ praxis. Therefore the use of critical postmodernism offers an essential lens to view the contemporary issues prevalent in higher education, specifically the difficult to critique due to the its nebulousness, neoliberalism. Using educational criticism and connoisseurship to present and critique the social justice praxis of two SSAOs offers a unique and critical insight pressures and contradictions facing all operating in US higher education at a time of great contestation. This review of literature, and specifically the scholarship on leadership in higher education, demonstrates the dearth of research on student affairs SJ leadership praxis, representing the primary gap identified in this review of higher education literature.

Chapter Three: Methodology

"I know of no 'method' for the conduct of qualitative inquiry in general or for educational criticism in particular. There is no codified body of procedures that will tell someone how to produce a perceptive, insightful, or illuminating study of the educational world" (Eisner, 1998, p. 169).

The purpose of this research is to examine the art of social justice praxis through studying two SSAOs in different higher education institutional contexts. Given the problem of concern for this research and the critical predilections of the researcher, the method for this study is educational criticism and connoisseurship (Ed Crit), a form of qualitative inquiry. Educational criticism and connoisseurship methodology was largely conceptualized by Elliot Eisner, who views qualitative research as an art form (Eisner, 1976, 1997, 2002, 2005; Locke & Riley, 2009). The methodology draws on the Deweyan (1934) notion of reducing perception to art, and applies this concept to education. Dewey (1897) and later Eisner (1967) encourage educators to interrupt the unconscious education process through examining the psychological and sociological aspects of the socializing educational milieu. "But through education society can formulate its own purposes, can organize its own means and resources, and thus shape itself with definiteness and economy in the direction in which it wishes to move" (Dewey, 1897, p. 80). Dewey (1897, 1934) suggests progress marked by holistic education and a more democratic educational system.

Building off principles of Dewey, Eisner (2002) indicates that the role of the

educational critic is to, "function as a midwife to perception, so to talk about the qualities

constituting the work of art that others, lacking the critic's connoisseurship, will be able

to perceive the work more comprehensively" (p. 213). The goal of educational criticism

and connoisseurship is to, "focus…on the qualities of a classroom environment, teaching

style, or curriculum…[and to]...shed light on what often makes…experiences most

memorable" (Flinders & Eisner, 1994, p. 348). Educational criticism and

connoisseurship helps identify and describe exemplary practice, and the art of that

practice (Eisner, 1976; Flinders & Eisner, 1994). Smith (2012) when speaking of

research with indigenous peoples offers a framing of social justice research at the heart of

this project and well married with Ed Crit:

> There are enduring questions about power relations, about agency and structure,
> ethics and methodologies. Research is simply one sight at which these issues
> intersect. Research is important because it is the process for knowledge
> production; it is the way we constantly expand knowledge. Research for social
> justice expands and improves the conditions for justice; it is an intellectual,
> cognitive and moral project, often fraught, never complete, but worthwhile. (p.
> 214-215)

This spirit of embracing the complexity of the cognitive and the moral, and being adverse

to finality, is demonstrated by some Ed Crit scholars' distaste for a "conclusion" section

in a research paper.

Related to theoretical grounding, Barone (2005) asserts that Ed Crit fits well

under critical and postmodern theoretical frameworks because it shares goals with

postmodernism of critiquing modernist science and totalizing meta-narratives, and

focuses on documenting exemplary practice for transformation at the heart of critical

theory. The focus on the art of leadership or teaching in Ed Crit is well matched with

postmodernism. "The close affinity between artistic and intellectual genres within the

postmodern tradition makes it imperative for us to examine some of the key features of

the artistic" (Prasad, 2005, p. 220). Therefore educational criticism and connoisseurship

guides this holistic critique of the art of SSAO leadership practices as related to SJ praxis.

Educational criticism and connoisseurship falls under the umbrella of Arts-Based

Educational Research (ABER) (Barone & Eisner, 1998; Eisner, 1998, 2002; Uhrmacher

& Matthews, 2005). Also under this umbrella include, but are not limited to, the

qualitative methods of narrative inquiry, portraiture, a/r/tography, and storytelling, with

Ed Crit as the most common form of ABER (Barone & Eisner, 1998; Eisner, 2002;

Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997; Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis, & Grauer, 2006;

Uhrmacher & Matthews, 2005). Arts-Based Educational Research, which seeks to

promote epistemological diversity, has two criteria; first it is meant to enhance

perspectives pertaining to certain human activities which are educational in nature, and

second, certain design elements or aesthetic qualities are infused throughout the inquiry

process and documentation (Barone & Eisner, 2006). Barone and Eisner (2006)

contextualize ABER by asserting that it is, "a heuristic through which we deepen and

make more complex our understanding of some aspect of the world" (p. 3). Educational

criticism and connoisseurship focuses on four elements, description, interpretation,

evaluation, and thematics (Eisner, 1998). Each of these focus areas help the educational

critic transform the qualities of teaching or leading into a public form that illuminates,

interprets, and appraises the qualities of that practice (Eisner, 1998).

Specifically description is an "attempt to identify and characterize, portray, or render in language the relevant qualities of educational life" (Eisner 2002, p. 226). The description in educational connoisseurship and criticism is similar to the thick description often used in ethnography and aims to position a reader in a setting (Creswell, 2007; Geertz, 1973; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). However the nuances in Ed Crit description include the vivid use of metaphor and the focus on presenting multiple sources of data in the depiction, including quotes, researcher observations, and social artifacts (Eisner, 2002). Artifacts are the most visible and often telling aspects of an organizations culture, reflective of history, traditions, stories, social interactions, and the values of a campus (Strange & Banning, 2000; Schein, 1992). A comprehensive definition of artifacts consistent with the operationalization advanced by Eisner (2002) is offered by Schein (1992):

> Artifacts would include the visible products of the group such as the architecture of its physical environment, its language, its technology and products, its artistic creations, and its style as embodied in clothing, manners of address, emotional displays, myths and stories told about the organization, published lists of values, observable rituals, ceremonies, and so on. (p. 17)

Expanding this definition to include pictures, documents, websites, e-mails, newspapers and other media, and internal documents help paint a more holistic portrait of an environment.

Interpretation relates to the use of researcher connoisseurship and observation skills to offer unique interpretations of collected data in its various forms. More simply, interpretation is meaning making (Eisner, 2002). Importantly, the difference between description and interpretation is fluid. "The conceptual frameworks the critic applies to

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the study also guide the construction of the interpretations. In the educational criticism, there is no clear demarcation between description and interpretation" (Dotson, 2007, p. 15). This tendency to avoid research compartmentalization and blur typically rigid methodological boundaries is in harmony with descriptions of educational connoisseurship and criticism elsewhere (Barone & Eisner, 2012). The subjectivity in interpretation is seen as an asset, consistent with postmodernism which holds that there are multiple valid truths which can deepen learning and understanding (Eisner, 1998). Therefore my interpretations of the educational situations I experience with each SSAO are valid and uniquely illuminating as a reflection of my life experiences and content knowledge of social justice and leadership.

The focus on evaluation demonstrates the educational critic's goal of contributing to the improvement of an educational situation (Eisner, 2002). Eisner (2002) describes evaluation as being constructively critical while highlighting both exceptional practice and opportunities for improvement. Context for the interpretation and evaluation in educational criticism and connoisseurship is further explored in the criticism section below. Like interpretation, the value in evaluation comes from its subjectivity and uniquely revealing possibilities from my position as co-researcher.

Finally from the description, interpretation, and evaluation emerge salient themes from the educational criticism. This focus on themes, called thematics, "offer a summary of sorts as well as providing ways to generalize to other educational situations" (Eisner 2002, p. 233). The generatively of educational criticism and connoisseurship is dissimilar to the sample population generalizations with which quantitative researchers

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are consumed, and rather is more organic and individualized putting the onus on the reader to draw relevant conclusions. Therefore thematics are not explicitly identified in the narratives to follow, but are woven throughout the narratives and addressed more directly in the final chapter.

Educational criticism and connoisseurship methodology lends itself well to examining the art of an effective SSAO engaged in SJ leadership involving teaching, policy analysis and making, and the use of critical pedagogy through synergistically engaging with content and people (Rasmussen, 2003). Eisner (1998) calls for more ABER specifically examining educational administrators. Barone and Eisner (1998) further encourage researchers to engage in pilot studies to refine the skills and interpretive abilities for arts-based research. This recommendation has been employed by this researcher who previously engaged in such a pilot study with a SSAO and subsequently presents findings in the form of a narrative (see Appendix F for a sample of the narrative complied by the author in the Winter/Spring 2013). Connoisseurship and criticism, the two primary components of Ed Crit differentiating it from other qualitative methods, are explored below.

Connoisseurship

Connoisseurship is the art of appreciation (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Eisner, 1998). It is a way of making public what a researcher observes, interpreted through the lens of an individual with a refined sense of educational purpose (Eisner, 1998). Despite connotations of expertness implying that only a select few can engage in connoisseurship, like a wine critic, anyone willing to devote time and energy to developing competency in

an specific area can engaged in Ed Crit (Eisner, 1998). Appreciation does not necessitate liking the artistic act, such as SSAO leadership, only the critical acknowledgement of the activity (Eisner, 1998). Connoisseurship takes the private act of appreciation and makes it public, and political, when combined with criticism which is described below (Eisner, 1998).

Connoisseurs of anything, baseball, modern art, or architecture for example, appreciate what they encounter (Eisner, 1976).

> Appreciation does not necessarily mean liking something, although one might like what one experiences. Appreciation here means an awareness and an understanding of what one has experienced. Such an awareness provides the basis for judgment. (Eisner, 1976, p. 138)

The transformation from appreciation to using one's connoisseurship as a basis for judgment is what Eisner refers to as criticism.

Educational criticism and connoisseurship offers a unique method of inquiry underused in social science research in general, rarely used in higher education, and virtually never published in peer-reviewed journals in higher education. Part of this is pragmatic, "Educational criticisms are long, which makes them more difficult to publish in a journal" (Dotson, 2007, p. 19). Therefore educational criticisms are more likely to be seen in dissertations (Gutiérrez, 2013; Ingman, 2013; Trousas, 2009) or in sections of edited books (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Eisner, 2005; Uhrmacher & Matthews, 2005). Exelemporary ed crit dissertations which through the method offer otherwise unavailable insights into educational experiences include Gutiérrez's (2013) research employing critical discourse analysis and self-ethnography in addition to ed crit to evaluate the way staff members in a Head Start organization perceive and operationalize equality policy.

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Trousas (2009) uses ed crit to examine arts-centered school reform identifying important phenomena such as arts-centered reformers internalizing arts-centered school reform as a state of mind, and that arts-centered reform requires a public presence in a local community to thrive.

In a recent study, Ingman (2013) using ed crit and sustained field work to investigate adventure educational experiences. He subsequently offers a matchless and comprehensive argument that participants re-envision, re-claim, and re-construct traditional notions and paradigms of educational experiences by privileging transformative learning experiences which can only occur outside in an adventure education context (Ingman, 2013). Each of these studies use lengthy narratives to help the reader experience rich educational settings with vivid description and masterful interpretation, evaluation, and the presentation of themes, the goal of this and all educational criticisms.

Criticism

Criticism is the art of disclosure (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Eisner, 1976; Flinders, 2005). One can be a connoisseur in private, but when evaluations become public, they become criticisms available for digestion and scrutiny by a public. Criticism is empirical in that the qualities described are contextualized by their relationships to the larger subject matter examined, in this case social justice praxis. Like connoisseurship, lacking a particular content expertise does not mean that useful criticisms cannot be developed as the criticism is subjective; it is expected that different critics will view the same situation in uniquely complex and nuanced manners (Eisner, 2002). "Criticism is an art of saying

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useful things about complex and subtle objects and events so that others less

sophisticated, or sophisticated in different ways, can see and understand what they did

not see and understand before" (Eisner, 1998, p. 3). One can be a great connoisseur

without being a critic, but it is imperative that a critic has a developed level of

connoisseurship (Eisner, 1998). Furthermore Eisner (1998) asserts:

> The major function of educational criticism, like all criticism, is the expansion of
> perception and the enlargement of understanding. Critics speak so others can see
> and comprehend; criticism is an educational venture. If criticism does not
> illuminate its subject matter, if it does not bring about more complex and sensitive
> human perception and understanding, it fails in its primary aim. (p. 113)

When a critic conducts research and analysis well, the work is accessible and easily

understood by readers who are able to see what they would have missed without the

critic's observations (Eisner, 1976, 1998). The criticism may be constructively critical

but always productive, as Eisner (1998) reminds researchers, "It is important to provide

criticism in a form that leads to constructive, not destructive, results" (p. 117). While Ed

Crit is an intentionally malleable qualitative methodology, Eisner (1998, 2002) has built

in several data collection and analysis parameters aimed at ensuring credibility and

trustworthiness.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Validity, with its positivist epistemological underpinnings and its aspirations for

objectivity, is largely not of concern to Arts Based Educational Researchers. However

credibility and trustworthiness, though contested terms of qualitative research, can be

approached through thoroughness, accuracy, and believability (Eisner & Barone, 2006;

Rubin & Rubin, 2012). While methodological rigor is important, educational critics,

"Reject the assumption that unique interpretation is a conceptual liability in understanding, and they see the insights secured from multiple views as more attractive than the comforts provided by a belief in a single right one" (Eisner, 1998, p. 35). One way of ensuring trustworthiness is through using multiple forms of data, or triangulation, to ensure structural corroboration (Eisner, 1998). Educational Critics:

> Seek a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility that allows us to feel confident about our observation, interpretations, and conclusions. In seeking structural corroboration we look for recurrent behaviors or actions, those theme-like features of a situation that inspire confidence. (Eisner, 1998, p. 110)

Findings are structurally corroborated when pieces of evidence validate each other, the story holds up, the components fit, it makes sense, and the facts are consistent (Eisner, 1998).

While some scholars assert that verification practices such as member checking and triangulation are inherently hegemonic and positivist (Gildersleeve, 2010), I find that engaging in these practices with participants helps our collective meaning-making evolve as we egaltiraningly explore observations and criticisms. For example, I noticed a military display (Figure 6) for the U.S. Army National Guard in the student union at Prairie View College.
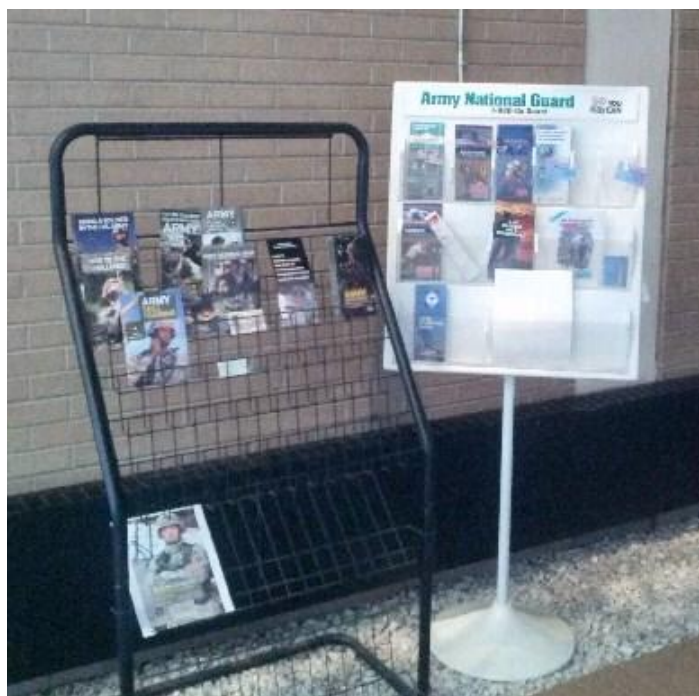
Figure 6: Military Display

I initially interpreted the presence of such a display as reflective of an exploitative

militarism. However, after member-checking this image with John, and our collective

coding of this image, we unpacked some of my classist perceptions of the military, and

some of John's passive and uncritiqued view of the militarization on college campuses.

The process of member-checking does not represent the search for a singular positivist

truth, but another opportunity for deepening collective understanding benefiting research

outcomes. Therefore member checking and triangulation were used throughout the

research process.

Another strategy for credibility and trustworthiness offered by Eisner (1998) is

referential adequacy, or the degree to which the narrative makes the situation vivid.

Referential adequacy is related to consensual validation, or the testing of findings by

scholars or practitioners familiar with the educational setting depicted (Barone & Eisner,

2006; Eisner, 1998). Checking referential adequacy and consensual validation can be done in a myriad of ways, including the familiar practice for qualitative researchers of member checking or even the reader or other parties interested with the research sharing narratives and themes and distilling utility related to transference. Overall, an educational criticism is creditable, trustworthy, or perhaps even valid when the gestalt is an, "ordered portrayal organized tightly around themes" (Barone & Eisner, 2006, p. 266). The orderedness and tightness does not imply a strict adherence to any structure for constructing narratives (such as chronological), but that the data presented can be explained thematically. One way in which referential adequacy and consensual validation is achieved in this research is through the inclusion of a SSAO from a land-grant institution on the dissertation committee.

Arts-based research such as Ed Crit should be judged on its illuminating effect, it's generatively, and its ability to focus tightly on educationally salient issues (Barone & Eisner, 2006). Eisner (2002) recognizes that with methodological flexibility come some inherent challenges:

> There are, to be sure, complexities engendered when such openness in approach is not only permitted but encouraged…The demands on the reader are likely to be more diverse and at times more complex where personal style is given an opportunity to flourish. Yet, that price is one I believe worth paying if it helps us free ourselves from a standardized and often homogenized approach to the study of educational practice. (p. 348)

It is with this spirit of simultaneously embracing openness and rigor that this project has been designed. Due to the identified problem, the critical postmodern framework, and the praxis and social justice conceptual frameworks used, educational criticism and connoisseurship is the methodology best suited to answer the research question of, *How*

do SSAOs enact, through leadership, social justice praxis, because it allows for an aesthetic and comprehensive review and critique of the art of social justice leadership as enacted by SSAOs. Also, Ed Crit provides the space for extended narratives as the mechanism for data presentation. This depth allows for a lengthily and nuanced articulation of the research findings, allowing the reader to becoming intimately involved with the vivid depiction, and therefore predicting individualized learning and growth. Now that Ed Crit has been presented as the methodology for this research, the specific methods employed including participants, data collection, and data analysis strategies are described.

Methods

Participants. This educational criticism (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Eisner, 1998, 2002; Uhrmacher & Matthews, 2005), like a case study design (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2009), is bound to two individual SSAOs and subsequently contextualized by their higher educational institutions. Purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2007) was used to select two individual SSAOs based on my social and professional networks. One participant contacted me and asked to participate in the study. The second participant was selected due to her strong reputation regionally as an excellent social justice leader, the desired institutional context of a land-grant university, contrasting the other two-year college institutional context, and because the SSAO had some different social identities than the first SSAO. Differing institutional contexts and social identities of the SSAO's was sought not necessarily to facilitate comparison, but to ensure some diversity and novelty in the narratives. Finally both sites were accessible to by car, with the first site being 2.5

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hours one way, and the second 1.5 hours one way, which was pragmatically essential

given the lack of a research budget and time constraints.   Brief overviews of the

institutional context and individual SSAO are offered to help contextualize the setting

and the subsequent presentation of narratives.

Prairie View College. The first institutional site is Prairie View College

(pseudonym), a two year rural college in the plains west of the U.S. Rocky Mountains.

Prairie View was established in the 1940s and has grown to a current student population

of 1070 full time student in the Fall of 2010, and it houses about 600 students in on-

campus Residence Halls. The college is situated in a rural town accessed by a major

interstate boasting a population of approximately 18,000 on the 2013 United States

Census. In the fall of 2008 (the most recent institutional data available) Prairie View's

student population was approximately half males and females and 85% Caucasian, 4.5%

African American, 0.5% Native American, 0.8% Asian, and 8.1% Hispanic. The college

is more racially diverse than the region housing the college, which is over 90%

Caucasian. The college has become more racially diverse each year since 2005.

The faculty is almost universally homogenous racially, with 99.98% of the faculty

being Caucasian in 2008. Field work conducted for this research supported the assertion

that this percentage is current, limited by the restraints of visual recognition of race.

Prairie View College has 83 programs of study, including Associate's degrees designed

to transfer to a four-year institution, applied Associate's degrees intended to directly

prepare people for a career, and certificate programs including Auto & Diesel Master

Technician and Cosmetology. The 2008 entering class at Prairie View had a 34.6%

graduation rate from desired degree or certificate program, slightly higher than the mean graduate rate from other 2-year colleges in the state. Graduation rates were considerably higher for females (42.4%) than males (30.6%). Caucasian students (40.3%) were much more likely to graduate than their students of color contemporaries, African American (12.5%), Asian (16.7%), and Hispanic (35%) (Not enough of a Native American population was reported to present averages).

The Prairie View campus has approximately 30 academic buildings including 6 residence halls split between the main campus and the north campus just a few miles away. New construction on the campus includes a sports complex and a new residence hall, with the main liberal arts academic building undergoing renovation this upcoming summer. Parking on campus is free, and most students have vehicles. The nearest college campus is 100 miles away, and most of the students who attend Prairie View come from the surrounding rural areas. There are 37 student organizations on campus, though some are more active than others, and the campus embraces its' sports teams, particularly women's and men's basketball and women's volleyball.

The SSAO at Prairie View College is Mr. John Stenson (pseudonym), whose title is Vice President of Student Services. John oversees all of the student affairs operations at the college, including Student Life, Counseling and Advising, New Student Enrollment and Admissions, and Financial Aid. He reports directly to the college president and serves on the president's cabinet and leadership team. John has recently been promoted to this Vice President role after re-organization directed by the college president.

Land Grant University. The second site for observation, Land Grant University

(pseudonym), is located in the mountain-west region of the United States. The university

enrolled approximately 13,000 students in 2013, and is a land-grant institution founded in

late 1800s. Land-grant institutions were designated by the federal government through

the 1862 Morrill Act (Komives, Woodard, & Associates, 2003). Originally designated to

promote agriculture and the mechanic arts, land-grant institutions in the United States

have a long history of being intentionally accessible to the citizens of its state (Komives,

Woodard, & Associates, 2003). Land Grant University had a 95% acceptance rate in

2010, and enrolls students from all 50 U.S. states and 90 countries.

Land Grant University is positioned in a town of approximately 30,000 people,

proudly designated a college-town by staff at the university. Incoming first-year students

are required to live on campus, and the undergraduate on-campus enrollment is just over

8,000. About half of the students at the university are male, half female, and 91% of the

students are Caucasian. There are more than 250 clubs and organizations on campus, a

small fraternity and sorority life community, and the NCAA Division-1 sports teams are

largely popular on campus. The campus has almost 200 different academic program

offerings. The regionally isolated university is flanked by three community colleges, one

50 miles to the east, another 150 miles to the north, and a third 200 miles to the west.

The sparely populated state does not have a complex higher education system, though

institutional collaboration is at times hindered by the great distance between colleges and

universities. The large campus is navigated by walking, biking, driving, and a campus

shuttle which frequently canvasses the university.

Land Grant University is strongly supported by the state legislature, who annually awards the university a block grant constituting a substantial portion of the university operating budget. Subsequently, the university has kept tuition low, and both in state and out of state students at university have a tuition rate in the bottom quartile when compared to peer institutions. Land Grant University has recently been subject to increased scrutiny related to policies and practices which Darder (2005) argues are part of a larger technocratic movement in US higher education. This facilitates increasing pressure on state funders, chiefly the state legislator, to view higher education using a cost benefit private sector model with retention rate data as the essential metric used to judge performance. This myopic view of higher education performance fails to take into account for example the high number of first generation college students at Land Grant University, an identity which makes retention typically more difficult due to the lack of immediate family members who have already successfully navigated higher education. The current fall to fall first year student retention rate of 74%, but Land Grant University and its leadership, chiefly the SSAO, is under pressure to raise this percentage to 80%. Critical conversations are occurring on campus about how to increase retention while remaining land grant mission congruent, which for Land Grant University functionally results in basically open enrollment admission policies.

Another notable tension on campus at Land Grant University is the role of the private sector, particularly oil and gas companies (often re-framed as the "energy industry" by administrators on campus) in determining curricular offerings. Indirect revenue comes to Land Grant University through tax dollars from large oil and gas

companies, and substantial direct money also comes to the university from these companies in the form of sponsoring campus infrastructure including specific innovative laboratories. To what extent outside influences can and should impact not only curricular offerings but also university strategic planning is a common conversation on campus.

The Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA) at Land Grant University is Dr. Lynne McCallihaster (pseudonym). Lynne (she is very rarely referred to on campus using her title of Dr., and she expresses the desire to be called Lynne, a desire to which I acquiesce), is responsible for a large division containing 300 full time employees, and many more part-time and student employees. Prior to assuming the role of VPSA, Lynne served as the Assistant Vice President for Enrollment Management for six years at Land Grant University. She is responsible for approximately fifteen functional areas including Residence Life and Student Health Services, and she currently has eight direct reports in the flat organizational structure she designed for the division of student affairs. Lynne reports directly to the university president, and she serves on the president's cabinet.

Data Collection

Educational criticism and connoisseurship offers no formulaic data collection protocol, therefore procedures of case study data collection (Yin, 2009) are combined with the modest direction offered by Eisner (1998, 2002) for educational critics in terms of data collection to inform this multi-pronged approach. Educational criticism and connoisseurship has few essentials in terms of data collection, save the necessity for field work (Eisner, 1998). Data collection for this research includes critical observations of meetings, critiques of supervision strategies and mentoring, an analysis of physical

construction and decoration of SSAO office space, an inventory and analysis of other

artifacts (dress, modes and types of transportation, nonverbal patterns, discourse patterns,

etc), and an analysis of documents produced by the SSAO and shared with me. Similar

to a case study design and to some ethnographies, almost anything worthy of observation,

study, and critique is examined as long as it has meaning significant to the process of

social justice praxis on behalf of SSAOs (Flinders, 2005; Yin, 2009). Also like an

institutional ethnography, introduced by Smith (1985) to explore and critique with one's

embodied experience with systems of power, this research is concerned with the

institutionalization of power in organizations. However, different from an institutional

ethnography, with its focus on the study of texts and discourses (Devault, 2006), multiple

sources of data are considered and in-person observations are the crux of the data

collection.

Shadowing, the major data collection strategy, is different from participant

observation or ethnography in that the researcher engages in participatory collaboration

as SSAOs are shadowed and everyday work functions are performed. This does not

imply a lack of recognition that my presence altered how the SSAOs and their colleagues

and students interacted, known as the Hawthorne effect (Berg, 2009). But the difference

between shadowing and participant observation reflects the intention to be as receptive as

possible for observations rather than participate verbally in meetings or discussions

(Berg, 2009). My shadowing was designed to minimize the Hawthorne effect though

making salient my student identity and positioning the data collection process as an

educational opportunity (Berg, 2009; McDonald, 2005; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I was

introduced in all settings as a student interested in the SSAO's leadership. Colloquially, I

became known on the campuses at the student from the University of Denver following

the SSAO around. Therefore my presence framed as unconcerning to others and thereby

facilitating authentic, aesthetically speaking, workplace behaviors (Rubin & Rubin,

2012).

Reflective memo writing was used throughout data collection, a fruitful space for

me to converse metacognitively about data collection and emergent themes (Saldaña,

2012). Within these memos are detailed field notes vigorously taken as meetings and

informal interpersonal interactions were observed (Saldaña, 2012). Data collection was

informed by Eisner's (1998) direction to educational critics to:

> Seek a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility that allows us to feel
> confident about our observation, interpretations, and conclusions. In seeking
> structural corroboration we look for recurrent behaviors or actions, those theme-
> like features of a situation that inspire confidence. (Eisner, 1998, p. 110)

Attention to structural corroboration is evident in the data analysis section offered next;

however, it also informs the intentional data collection process; for data collection,

analysis, and interpretation are processes that overlap and at times occur simultaneously

(Saldaña, 2012). Therefore keen observation and careful attention to subtle nuances were

of primary importance throughout the period of interview and observation (Lawrence-

Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

Interviews are another data collection strategy. Due to the length of time for

observation and interview, "informal" and "semi-structured" descriptors may have

explanatory power in terms of convention in qualitative interviews, however as consistent

with the theoretical framework of critical postmodernism, the actual interview

experiences were co-constructed with the participant. These organic interpersonal

exchanges involved my questions of the participants, but substantial time was also

devoted to reciprocal self-disclosure and rapport building. This malleability afforded

participant and researcher the opportunity to discard and perhaps exchange power-laden

titles grounded in positivist empiricism.

Finally artifacts were collected as the last primary data collection strategy. These

artifacts included meeting agendas, organization charts, e-mails, pictures, and marketing

materials, including websites (Eisner, 2002; Schein, 1992). I paid specific attention was

paid to the intentional construction of space by each SSAO, for example their offices, and

the social justice implications of physical objects such as pictures and books displayed.

All audio records, memos, documents, and photographs were transcribed, coded, and

organized accordingly by the author, representing a preliminary and iterative stage of

data analysis. Pink (2007) reminds researches that:

> The field notes, diaries and images that do accompany researchers home should
> always be understood in connection with those representations and experiences
> that it is impossible to transfer spatially or temporally in any tangible form. (p.
> 127)

Educational criticisms and connoisseurship is an ideal guiding methodology for the

presentation of data in the form of lengthy and context-filled narratives affording the

opportunity for spatial and temporal contextualization.

There is no fixed length of time necessary for Ed Crit field work, as satisfactory

data collection is not contingent upon time but the quality of the evidence needed to

support observations and critiques of the nuances and subtleties of the educational setting

and experience (Barone & Eisner, 1998; Eisner, 1998). To help determine the

appropriate length of time for field work, the concept of saturation often associated with

Grounded Theory methods is employed (Creswell, 2007). Saturation refers to a point in

data collection where data are repetitive, when themes of hypothesis have been reinforced

by multiple data sources, and new findings become elusive. In this dissertation, the point

of saturation for each site was mutually identified by me and the SSAO, and each

happened after approximately seven days of data collection. Specific data collection

strategies, including the identification of the saturation point, are highlighted below for

each of the two sites.

   Prairie View College. For the first site for observation, Prairie View College,

seven days were spent on campus. Prior to data collection, informed consent for

participation was solicited and secured (See Appendix E). The seven days amounted to

approximately 48 hours of active observation and interview. Additionally, more than 35

hours were spent commuting to and from the campus, which were ripe opportunities for

reflection. One evening was spent on site, at the local "Cowboy Inn," which provided

effective time for reflection and memoing. Observations usually began at 8:30am, and

concluded around 5pm. One evening an on-campus basketball game was attended with

the SSAO and his daughter as the hosts, which offered the time for more informal

conversation and observation of student fan behavior. The seven days of observation

included each day of the work week, allowing observation of regular weekly fluctuations

and weekly standing meetings. Almost five hours of taped interview occurred, with

many more hours of informal conversation providing ample opportunity for illuminating

conversation.   Outside of the interviews with each SSAO, meetings were not tape-recorded, as people outside of the SSAO are not the focus of the study.

Occasionally when the participant had personal errands, for example shopping for a child's school program, I engaged in fruitful memoing and reflection in the middle of the work day (Saldaña, 2012). Each evening, I created a quiet environment for processing the day and engaging in deep memoing about observations and potential codes for at least one hour. Immediately after the data collection of each site, I engaged in transcribing, coding, and the sketching of narratives while the data were still fresh.

The point of saturation at Prairie View College organically surfaced on the sixth day of data collection. John Stenson was remarkably forthcoming and transparent during data collection. Citing Human Resources policies, and given the sensitivity of the discussions, I was not allowed to shadow the president's cabinet meetings John attended each Monday morning. Additionally once during the shadow experience a staff member requested to meet with John in private. Otherwise, during the six days of shadowing I was present for each meeting, conversation, and during other work time. This incredible access facilitated deep and meaningful observations. On the sixth day of observation, also the second Monday of field work, the SSAO reflected that redundancy was occurring, and that he felt confident a holistic picture of social justice leadership had been presented. Organic follow-up questions and probes were useful to facilitate interview depth and to clarify and contextualize comments (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). However daily interviews began to cover repeated themes from the week earlier, and I struggled to formulate novel questions on the fifth day of observation, as the topics in the interview

protocol were covered exceptionally (see Appendix D). This saturation point was greatly facilitated by John's willingness to be interviewed several times throughout the day, as he was very accommodating with his schedule. Additionally, John expressed a desire to remain involved with the data analysis and reporting through discussing the project on an ongoing basis. He offered additional interviews or observation as needed, was interested in reading any preliminary themes, and agreed to read any iterations of the final narrative offering feedback throughout the process. All of these factors, the intimacy of the observations, the redundancy in interviews, the offer to stay involved on an ongoing basis, and the initial suggestion from John, without prompting, that saturation had been reached coalesced into a clear stopping point.

Land Grant University. At Land Grant University, the SSAO Lynne McCallihaster and I organically determined a saturation point on the seventh day of observation. The seven days amounted to approximately 43 hours of active observation and interview. Additionally, more than 28 hours were spent commuting to and from the campus, which were beneficial opportunities for reflection. The times for data collection varied greatly, with one day beginning at 2:30pm and ending at 6:30pm. Mornings typically began between 7:00am-8:30am, and ended between 4:00pm-6:00pm. The seven days of observations included each day of the work week, allowing observation of regular weekly fluctuations and weekly standing meetings. A two hour taped interview occurred at the conclusion of the observation period and outside of the interview, meetings were not tape-recorded, as people outside of the SSAO are not the focus of the study. Below,

Figure 5 visually demonstrates the amount of time spend in the field during data

collection for each of the two observation sites.

	Prairie View College	Land Grant University
Days on campus	7	7
Active observation hours	48	43
Structured memo time	35	28
Taped interview hours	5	2
Total days in the field	14	
Total hours in the field	112	

Figure 5. Data collection chart. This chart visually demonstrates time spend in the field.

Initially, Lynne McCallihaster was relatively guarded with her schedule, and there

was frequently time during the workday when she asked me to not be present in

meetings. This offered phenomenal time for memoing and the refinement of

observations (Saldaña, 2012). Lynne also frequently met 1-1 with staff members before

or after meetings, giving me the opportunity to have meaningful conversations with other

staff members at Land Grant University. These additional opportunities to learn about

the university and Lynne deepened and enriched observations. I also met 1-1 with three

different director-level direct reports of Lynne's, allowing me to formulate a more

holistic picture of her social justice leadership. Additionally, Lynne scheduled me for a

campus tour with a current student, and another current student desired to meet with me

to talk about student affairs graduate programs. These opportunities to lean about the

campus and Lynne from current students proved invaluable. Lynne was busier with her

schedule than I ever could have imagined, with rarely more than a one hour block per day

when she was not in a meeting. Therefore our conversations typically occurred as we

were scurrying across campus to and from meetings.

Informed consent was secured (See Appendix E), and all topics in the interview

protocol were covered throughout the observation period (See Appendix D). The point of

data saturation organically arouse on the seventh day of data collection, as first identified

by Lynne. In our last interview Lynne confessed her apprehension about participating in

this study initially. More than a month had passed between the time of our initial

meeting where she agreed to participate in the research and the first day of data

collection, affording time to regret the very intimate research experience. This

apprehension may have facilitated the initial distance I felt during the observation period.

However by the end of the experience, the relationship I had with Lynne grew

immensely, and we became very comfortable with each other by the end of the

observation period. This increased comfort and trust resulted in increased transparency

and vulnerability, and the last few days of observation were remarkably rich. Lynne

offered the observation that she was confident I had a comprehensive picture of her social

justice leadership, and generously commended me on my observation and listening skills.

Lynne expressed a desire to remain in touch, and expressed interest in receiving

transcripts or written observations.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is an ongoing and holistic process occurring during every state of

research (Saldaña, 2012), and is informed by my antecedent knowledge of student affairs

in higher education which helped me identify and disclose the subtle nuances of SSAO

social justice leadership (Eisner, 1998). Specifically, I have been an involved student leader from the time I arrived on a college campus as an undergraduate in 1998. As a student I was involved in residential life, leadership programs, recreational activities, and gender programming. I have a Master of Science in Student Affairs in Higher Education, and professional work experience spanning a decade on a myriad of functional areas including Residential Life, Multicultural Programs, Admissions, Academic Advising, Student Conduct, and Orientation. I also have presented or co-presented dozens of educational program sessions at national higher education conferences and have published or co-published four peer reviewed academic articles and two book chapters. Moreover, I approach the work of student affairs in higher education with a critical eye, a focus on the aesthetics of college administration, and a commitment to social justice. My experience and critical inclinations coalesce to inform the connoisseurship I bring to this research.

Eisner (1998) offers little prescription for data collection, and similarly data analysis is intentionally left vague for educational critics so as not to restrict creativity. Due to the privilege of having several months to fully devote to data analysis, potential codes and themes arose organically, and they were compared to the raw data in its original forms including pictures, transcripts, and artifacts. The search for themes began on the first day of data collection, and continued until the final narratives were complete (Eisner & Barone, 2006). Momos provided an additional site for data analysis, a process which began before field work started and continued through the writing of this dissertation.

I transcribed over seven hours of audio tape from interviews. The transcription

process provided to be an essential component of data analysis, offering an opportunity

for coding, increased intimacy with the data, and it allowed salient quotations to be

identified for use in the narratives (Padgett, 2012). Transcribing was remarkably slow, as

I almost constantly took breaks from transcribing to memo based on new thoughts or

questions as my intimacy with the data deepened. Additionally, my data analysis

afforded particular attention to the importance of outliers, ensuring nothing significant in

the holistic data collection is missed (Barone & Eisner, 2006; Saldaña, 2012). For

example, a very cursory reference to a glass ceiling was made during a friendly

conversation at dinner one evening between Lynne and a friend of hers. I made note of

this reference in my memo that evening, and five days later during an interview I asked

Lynne about the reference, and it sparked a phenomenal dialog about gender and sexism

at the university. The dozens of memo pages are organized both chronologically and

thematically, therefore they do not progress in a true linear manner. Memo's were used

on an ongoing basis during data collection and analysis, offering a site for journaling, the

identification of themes, and the preliminary analysis of data (Saldaña, 2012).

Visual data and artifacts, such as pictures I took and student newspapers I

reviewed, were also collected and analyzed on an ongoing basis. Again, Eisner is lean on

direction for data analysis, particularly for visual data, so I found some useful guidance

from Pink (2007, 2012). Pink's (2007, 2012) discussion of analyzing visual data is

specifically related to ethnographies, and mostly related to photography, however her

intentional discussion of visual data analysis proved useful. Pink (2007, 2012) argues

that a growing body of visual methodologies share the centering of the image in research design and subsequent interrogation. The pictures and artifacts in my study were analyzed as a way of arriving at a particular layer of knowledge, contextualized by other data and researcher observations (Pink, 2012).

I paid particular attention to the context for the photographs I took, recognizing that the positioning of myself and the subject were essential parts of the data collection and analysis process which impact how an audience receives the image (Grbich, 2007; Pink, 2007, 2012). This focus on context and subjectivity in interpreting data collection is informed by what Grbich (2007) calls a poststructural deconstruction analysis is a process where, "Alternative readings and multiple interpretations are essential in the recognition of the transitional and open-ended nature of images" (p. 166). A poststructural analysis aims to avoid finite or objective interpretations, therefore my interpretations are contextualized by both the frameworks guiding the study and by the holistic sociopolitical environment I experienced as part of the image. For example, the image I provide of the pick-up truck displaying a large United States and large Confederate flag (Figure 8) was secured as I approached the idling truck alone at dusk. I was nervous, my hand was shaking, impacting the quality and framing of the picture. I was focused on the driver of the tuck, whose silhouette behind tinted windows revealed both a gun rack and a copyboy hat. The driver was aware of my presence, as I was of his, and as I took the picture presented in this dissertation, the experience of taking the picture was informed by his and my subjective emotions and thoughts as we shared that moment

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in time. All data, visual or otherwise, were collected and analyzed while embracing the complexity of unfolding layers of context and setting.

Procedures

Participants have given ongoing feedback to data analysis through e-mail correspondence and phone conversations. For example, John Stenson and I have engaged in an ongoing discussions over e-mail about the Christmas holiday, Christian privilege, and holiday decorations. This afforded us the opportunity to continue and grow our process of collectively surfacing new ideas and learning. Also, participants were provided a copy of their transcript for review prior to coding, serving as a member check (Creswell, 2007), and confirming the accuracy of the transcript without any changes. This member check allowed participants a structured opportunity to elaborate or clarify quotes. Both participants were given their transcripts, and feedback was incorporated in this final dissertation. For example, John offered useful suggestions about items to include in the conclusion, including discussing the need for additional social justice training for SSAOs. Lynne also provided macro feedback, and was additionally concerned with some possibility identifiable information related to the job status of others' at Land Grant University. This information was subsequently further masked to help predict anonymity.

Data were coded using two different coding procedures. Coding allowed me to organize and view data in new and organic ways, efficiently facilitating data intimacy. To me, data intimacy reflects the dynamic and constantly evolving relationship I developed with countless observations in memos, the dozens of pages of interview

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transcripts, and the artifacts collected including pictures. The meta-cognitive experience

of translating data into this dissertation was substantially aided by limited life obligations

outside of this dissertation research, so I was able to almost fully devote my energy to

analysis and writing; advancing data intimacy.

Saldaña (2012) asserts that the best approach to analyzing data other than

interview transcripts, including visual data, is through a:

> Holistic, interpretative lens guided by strategic questions. Rather than one-word
> or phrase codes, the researcher's careful scrutiny of and reflection on images,
> documented through field notes and analytic memos, generate language-based
> data that accompanies the visual data. (p. 42-43)

Therefore, Descriptive Coding procedures were used for field notes, documents, and

photographs complied as part of the data collection process, the first coding procedure

(Saldaña, 2012). Saldaña (2012) defines Descriptive Coding as, "summarizing in a word

or short phrase—most often as a noun—the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data"

(p. 70). Descriptive coding's primary utility is succinct categorization and organization,

allowing expedited reference as first and second level themes are developed from

transcripts (Saldaña, 2012). For example the photographs I took were coded using

descriptors such as "MLK March," and artifacts were coded descriptively such as

"organizational chart."

Values Coding was the second coding procedure used, typically employed for

interview transcripts (Saldaña, 2012). Saldaña (2012) defines Values Coding as, "the

application of codes onto qualitative data that reflect a participant's values, attitudes, and

beliefs, representing his or her perspectives of worldview" (p. 89). Values Coding is

ideal for case study designs exploring inter and intrapersonal dynamics and social and

cultural factors impacting human behavior (Saldaña, 2012; Yin, 2009). Values Coding

necessitates a strong paradigm or perspective to frame the data analysis (Saldaña, 2012),

in this case social justice. Therefore throughout the coding process the theoretical

framework of critical postmodernism and conceptual frameworks of social justice and

praxis were evoked. The process of values coding for the transcripts was not conducted

in a strict line-by-line manner, given the focused nature of the coding on social justice.

Therefore parts of the transcripts relating to participants' responses to their professional

path to SSAO were not coded. Coding was conducted using the comments function of

Microsoft Word. The coding and recoding processes eventually lead to the development

of higher level themes, or thematics, which are presented below.

Representation. What follows are distinct narratives from the two sites of study

in the lengthy and descriptive manner outlined by the methods described in educational

criticism and connoisseurship. The narratives, which are different from most narratives

in qualitative research, are reflective of themes which arose from the data, but are not

organized around specific themes. Additionally, narratives are not necessarily

chronological, but rather represent an amalgamation of all the data collected and

analyzed. The goal of the narratives in Ed Crit is:

> …to enable the reader to participate vicariously in the auditory and visual qualities of
> the layered web of life [under observation] . . . it is the artistic reconstruction of
> events that may be more vividly experienced through that distillation called a work of
> art… (Eisner, 2002, p. 226-227)

The goal of an artistic production through narratives is achieved through the use of

creative literary devices including metaphor, simile, figurative language, hyperbole, and

imagery. The use of these literary devices, perhaps uncommon in traditional higher

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education dissertations, is reflective of the intangible and non-linear epistemology underlying postmodernism, namely the existence of multiple truths. The accessible language aims to engage diverse readers who will make their own meaning based on the engaging narratives. Therefore the data are not presented as a transcript or a concrete record, rather a subjective reflection grounded in the author's paradigm.

This creative first-person presentation of narratives is consistent with the direction provided by Eisner (2005) for educational criticism and connoisseurship, "The task of the critic is to . . . adumbrate, suggest, imply, connote, render, rather than to attempt to translate. In this task, metaphor and analogy, suggestion and implication are major tools" (p. 41). The presentation of narratives reflects the process of transformation, from data collection to data presentation:

> The task of the critic is to perform a mysterious feat well: to transform the qualities of a [experience] into a public form that illuminates, interprets, and appraises the qualities that have been experienced. . . . every act of criticism is a reconstruction. The reconstruction takes the form of an argued narrative, supported by evidence that is never incontestable; there will *always* be alternative interpretations of the "same" play, as the history of criticism so eloquently attests. (Eisner, 1998, p. 86, italics in original)

Due to the breadth and depth anticipated from data collection, the narratives are of substantial length, and are presented independently by SSAO observed.

Chapter Four: Big Man, Small Office

My commute to Prairie View College consists of 112 miles one way, 65 of which offer no cell phone service or opportunities to purchase gas. The winding two lane highway passes only four stoplights until I get into the college town. I pass more semi trucks than cars or pickup trucks, many of them carrying dozens of beef cows on their way to being fattened up and slaughtered at one of the grandiose feed lots in the area; perhaps reappearing as a hamburger. Hundreds of oil pumpjacks and dozens of active fracking sites mark the landscape, harvesting the liquid gold which forms the basis for the state succession activists longing to keep oil revenue in rural state areas rather then distribute profits among the masses in urban areas. While the 51st state vote failed during the time period of my field work, the roughly 50% registered Republicans and 25% registered Independents who populate the area enjoy a largely homogenous political climate. The small chain restaurants, gas stations, liquor stores, and the town's Walmart greet me on my way to campus. The Walmart provides an example, John later shares with me, of social justice activism in the community. A few years ago a group of Black, Prairie View College students complained to the Walmart management that the super-store carried no products for Black people's hair. Walmart acquiesced to the request, though it is not clear if sales or intrinsic motivation were chiefly at play in the accommodation.

The campus of Prairie View College rests on land originally occupied by the Southern Cheyenne, in a town of 18,000 people, 91% of whom are white. My approach to campus causes me to pass a local drive-through coffee shop offering coffee in my travel mug for seventy-five cents. Like a moth drawn to an outdoor bug zapper, on every approach and retreat from campus I get a cup, my evening coffee discounted by a quarter for my daily patronage. As I proceed through the small downtown flanking the college, I pass the tallest building for 100 miles, the three story Federal Building/US Post Office. The free open parking on campus allows me to park thirty feet from the student union, in a parking lot just 100 yards from three rows of active train tracks. The dark campus, with dated buildings and meager landscaping, is easy to navigate, though it is surprisingly large and spread out for its small size. There is an ever-present smell on campus. Not the smell of a feedlot, like the next nearest town of substantial size, but a consistent smell nonetheless which I suspect has something to do with either agriculture or the Sugar Mill built in 1905, abandoned in 1985, and still standing 7920 feet from campus.

Hamburgers

Entering John's office, I am greeted by figurines of hamburgers of various sizes. Some sit three or more inches high, others are small magnets. In total approximately twenty of these hamburgers, virtually all with buns radiating the same hue of yellow, as if all derived from the same genetically modified strands of mass produced wheat, are littered throughout his office. On my first day of observation I am fascinated with the collection. As I wait for John to re-enter his office during our first meeting, I read the displayed newspaper article from many years ago offering a touching story of John

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helping out a child in need, mentioning John's favorite food; hamburgers. As I wait in the small office with cement walls, the temperature slightly too warm for a jacket but too cold to be comfortable without one, a student comes into the office looking for John. Clearly demonstrating that this is the first time in his office, like a first-year student feeling lost on a college campus which only a few months later will feel familiar, she asks me with a tone of annoyance like an obligatory friend in a cheesy knock-knock joke, "what's the deal with the hamburgers?" I motion to the newspaper article displayed on top of the tall bookshelf across from one of the mass-produced thirty-year-old office chairs, likely constructed in a prison like the one just three miles from campus, probably by a man of color incarcerated for a non-violent crime getting paid two dollars an hour. She reads the sunlight faded article for approximately 80 seconds, and says without any inflection of true excitement, "Oh, cool."

By the time John returns to his office the student has decided to stop waiting. She told his administrative assistant, Wendy, that she will come back later. He apologizes for making me wait with sincerity despite his hurried retreat to his office chair. I report that a student is looking for him, but that she will be back. Without breaking eye contact with his computer screen, he replies, "ok." John looks uncomfortable at his computer. His six foot, five inch frame a poor match for his fixed office keyboard and computer monitor, a monitor at least 15 years old for which he is mocked three times during my six days of shadowing. If John raises his black office chair any higher, his arms will rest uncomfortably down toward his keyboard. If he lowers his chair, his knees slowly rise

like water in a lock on the Erie Canal, awkwardly climbing above his hip level as his elbows follow his waist.

I tell John that the student asked about the hamburgers in his office, an indirect way for me to also ask about the odd collection and giving me an out as I desire to avoid obvious, cliché, small talk. John, still glued to his computer screen like a 12 year old child seeing Niagara Falls for the first time, says, "what did you tell her?" I share that I told her to read the article, and John, now swiveling around 90 degrees to look at me with notably unwavering eye contact says, "Good. That is what I tell people too. I am kinda sick of having the hamburgers in my office, but I have had them so long, and so many are gifts, I can't get rid of them." It seems John keeps the hamburgers on display out of duty. His loyalty runs deep, and it impacts virtually every aspect of his leadership. I soon realize that John values integrity and consistency, and his core commitment to these concepts have directed his entire professional life. When he does not achieve these aspirations, he is a harsh critic of himself.

John's eclectic path to his current SSAO position began with a professional career in law enforcement. The day after John shared this with me, I mistakenly referred to his career in law enforcement as being a military career, demonstrating my naive conflation of two professions which I disrespectfully categorize as violent without nuance or differentiation. John graciously corrects me with impunity, and recalls being assigned to a school during his law enforcement career in Tampa Bay, Florida. Observing the counseling staff in the school caused John to wonder if he could be successful in a similar role, so he acquired a degree in counseling and became a public school counselor. John

and his family moved to the mountain west to be closer to an ailing family member, and

he quickly secured a job as a high school counselor. Shortly thereafter, John applied for

and got a job as a counselor at Prairie View College. He loved the job. Helping college

students was rewarding and challenging, and he soon became the director of counseling.

John enjoyed this position working with both students and staff, and quickly gained a

reputation on campus as an organized and diligent staff member with integrity. This

reputation helped him get promoted to the role of dean of students. John was not

particularly intentional about his quick ascension through the student services hierarchy

at Prairie View College:

> I think when I first got the job as the director of counseling my passion was still
>
> truly to counsel, to help students with academic issues or decision making, any of
>
> those things, and then as openings happened I began to think, hmm, I hadn't
>
> thought about it, about higher level positions, administrative positions…I really
>
> do enjoy all of the positions I am in. I am not highly, highly, competitive to try to
>
> aspire higher, and higher. If it unfolds that way, great. If it doesn't, I am happy.

It did unfold that way, and after a brief tenure as Dean of Students, John was promoted to

his current role as vice president of student services.

Democratic Leadership?

John prefers that those who do not know him, especially students, call him Mr.

Stenson rather than John. During my entire time on campus, only once did I observe

someone calling him Mr. Stenson. When asked about this observation, John says that he

will not correct people, but that out of respect he prefers Mr. Stenson. He indicated

comfort with me addressing him personally and in writing as John.

His passive title preference is reflective of John's operationalization of leadership.

He is passive in terms of his behavioral expectations of others and has very high

standards for his own behavior. He is self-critical, open to feedback, and attempts to

incorporate criticism to improve his leadership practice. Yet he thinks he is seen by

others as sometimes unapproachable, or too direct.

John unpacks the perceived disconnect between how he sees himself and how he

thinks others see him when asked about his leadership style:

In sociology, when I teach about leadership styles, there are three or four standard

types of leadership, and again it just sounds so, I hate to say it, I know my

leadership style is very democratic, but others might not always see the

democratic style of leadership whenever I am making a decision.

Thinking that he is not always perceived as democratic, a perception I did not notice

others' having of him, impacts how he performs in the role of vice president:

So it has to do with how I communicate. I have tried to be transparent, to be open

door, I have tried to be very communicative, I e-mail, I go to offices, I walk, I

don't make phone calls as much, I do walk around the building, I try to be highly

visible, but, there are still some who still view me as rigid, inflexible, and that's

not who I am in here (points to his heart), or in here (points to his head). But it

might come across that way at times, and that's just because of the circumstance

of the moment.

I am able to observe the embodiment of this intentional visibility during my observation.

For example, I suspect John may be the only SSAO in the United States, or at least one of very few, who personally walks around and posts monthly newsletters in every men's bathroom on campus (a colleague posts in the women's bathrooms). John wants to be visible, offering organic opportunities for engagement with student, faculty, and staff; and his posting of the flyers is one way he demonstrates this.

The tension between how John sees himself as a leader and how he thinks others see him is unmistakable, and our conversations frequently return to this theme. He approaches the dissonance with humility, and a remarkably sincere desire for others to see him as what he sees himself as; an open, welcoming, and accessible leader. When further elaborating on his leadership style, John reflects:

Democratic is the best. Laissez-Faire? No. Authoritarian? No. I bet if you ask the people around me, I would be more curious as to their perception of me than my own. Maybe I am not as self-aware as I would like to be, but I think so. Now you got me scratching my head.

In fact, John is hyper self-aware and self-deprecating. Of all the feedback he receives related to his leadership, he holds on to any negative feedback, and seems to disregard the positive. I observe this perfectionist aspiration, and when I ask about it, John shares:

I am not a perfectionist, I don't claim to be, I don't strive to be. That would be, ultimately, very discouraging to not achieve that, so I can say I'd like that to be my goal, to be that type of person, to be perceived that way, to come across that way, and ultimately be defined that way. I might miss the mark sometimes…I

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don't want to fall short. I guess humanly speaking, I know I will never be that, in

its purest form. But yeah, I would say that would be my goal. I would like to be

known at the leading advocate on campus for our students. I really would. I

really really would.

This quotation demonstrates a common pattern in John's meta-cognition. He initially

responds to my question saying that he is not a perfectionist, and that he does not strive to

be. But as he talks, he reflects, and he arrives at the conclusion that yes, maybe

perfectionism is his goal. I do not think this represents uncertainty, or a lack of self-

actualization. Rather, it is a willingness to embrace fluidity, change, and evolution.

Adding to this leadership intentionality, John sets up his small office in a manner

which makes him seem less intimidating, particularly for students who may only be in his

office once or twice during their college career. His office, the smallest SSAO office of

the two dozen or so I have seen, does not have a "power desk," and John sits with people

at the same level, on the same playing field (Figure 7).

Figure 7: Desk

Moreover, John acknowledges that his tall frame can be intimidating for people, so he often does not stand to greet people, instead spinning around in his black rolling office chair to make eye contact and smile. When students come into his office he always welcomes them, regardless of how busy he may be, "I should not turn students away, I should not tell students I am too busy to see them, I am not too high on the hierarchy that I tell students they should see people beneath me." Interestingly, while he never turns students away, John does share that he is intentional when asked if he is busy, always responding yes, confirming that he is busy, and that he is willing to make time to meet with students anyway. He says he does this because in reality he is always busy, something I also observed, and he wants to communicate that while he is judicious with his time, he wants people to know he will always make time for them. He explains, "I think to manage people you need empathy, you need availability, you have to be available to hear them, to listen to them." I observe John being an excellent listener, particularly when students approach him with an issue, such as needing to withdraw from the college for personal reasons.

One of John's colleagues calls him a "nervous-cat." John himself offers that he is seen as a "fence-straddler" by his colleagues on president's cabinet, between the left of a left-leaning president, and the right of a right-leaning provost. He offers, "Being moderate as I am, I tend to see both sides really understandably and comfortably." This is clearly a strength of John's, and he harbors little judgment of those around him on the left or right. When he runs meeting, he is invitational, attempting to surface the wisdom

of the group. He opens up space in meetings for introverted people to share, by saying

things like, "how about we hear from people we have not heard from yet," but does not

corner people or put them in a position where they feel disempowered or obligated to

speak. This appreciation for feedback and multiple opinions also translates to our

relationship. Many times John says something similar to, "Ryan, I look forward to your

comments and critiques, your honesty." John frequently checks in with me before and

after meetings, asking my feedback about his approach to situations and problems.

Perhaps due to my critical inclinations or exaggerated views of my contributions, I

always have an opinion when asked.

John's moderation and his ability to see multiple opinions as equally valid, can

also represent a limitation, particularly in terms of social justice leadership. For example,

a staff member in the college Admissions office comes by unannounced with a "great

idea." He is clearly very excited, as seen by his fast speech and animated non-verbal

communication. To offer context, John has been involved in several conversations with

different campus constituencies about the Admission office's decision to produce two

brochures for potential new students. The brochures have identical content, but one

brochure is designed to appeal to a more "urban" population through the inclusion of

abundant pictures of students of color. The other brochure, appealing to "rural" students,

has more pictures of white students as well as pictures of stereotypical farmers with large

hats, belt buckles, and cowboy boots. These two narratives, urban and rural, are

presented as dichotomous. John does not agree with this decades-long practice, but the

very opinionated admissions director with a long tenure at the college is a strong

advocate of the two brochure approach. Adding a layer of complexity, the admissions

director wants neither of the two brochures to have stereotypical images of "cowboys."

During a phone conversation on this topic, which John put on speaker phone for my

benefit, this director, a white man, asserts that "farmers" or "rural people" are the last

group left in America who it is "politically correct" to mock.

The issue of the one or two brochure approach, and the visual representation of

farmer stereotypes, has also been raised at the president's cabinet with similarly

polarizing views surfacing. John shares with me that he believes there should be one

brochure, though his argument lacks much conviction. I infer that, though he oversees

the admissions office and could direct the staff however he desires, his challenging of the

two brochure model is passive. Clearly having spent substantial time thinking about this

controversial debate, the admissions staff member who reports to the director, shares his

brilliant idea to help reconcile the problem with John. The white man in his thirties

offers that they should "take advantage" of the one Black farmer on campus who wears

stereotypical "cowboy" gear. The staff member proposes sending someone with a

camera to photograph this Black farmer to acquire pictures for an admissions brochure.

He says that he does not want to "tokenize" the Black student, a point with which John

agrees, but that they could pick a time when he "just happens" to be talking to some of

his white friends. John is less enthusiastic about the idea and appears uncomfortable; yet

he verbally validates that it is a great idea. I wonder if he approaches the conversation

differently because of my presence, perhaps guessing, accurately, that I think this is a

horribly offensive idea.   After the man leaves, John and I speak about the pitch, and

when he asks, I share my views. I offer that the idea sounds incredibly tokenizing, and

may set up the same kind of false perception John later advises against related to the

Confederate flag on campus.   I am very interested to see the spring admissions brochure,

and I guess it will contain a picture of this Black farmer.

John authentically strives for inclusive social justice leadership, but he is not

always comfortable with the academic and jargon-filled language to demonstrate this

interest. For example, he marks "Christmas" break rather than the more inclusive

"winter" or "holiday." He calls college-aged women girls. In our conversations we play

a game of verbal jujitsu related to race. He says minorities, I say people of color, which

forces him to equate people of color with Black. However when we are not engaged in

this kind of syllogism, John typically defaults to "African" when talking about both Black

students and students of color; though I am not aware of any African students on campus.

John never says Latino/a or Chinco/a, but prefers Hispanic. He refers to students'

"sexual preference" rather than sexual orientation or sexuality, and speaks of a student

who had a "suicide attempt," rather than the more academic, "person engaged in suicidal

behavior." When speaking of a trans*[2] student on campus, John's understanding of

gender identity is encapsulated by, "She wants to become a boy." I present this, not as

evidence of John's intolerance, but rather as an exploration of his path toward social

justice awareness. Revealingly, John shares that he just learned about the term social

justice five years ago, and I am unsure he would be able to comfortably offer a definition.

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[2] "Trans* is an umbrella term that refers to all of the identities within the gender identity spectrum. Trans (without the asterisk) is best applied to trans men and trans women, while the asterisk makes special note in an effort to include all non-cisgender gender identities, including transgender, transsexual, transvestite, genderqueer, genderfluid, non-binary, genderfuck, genderless, agender, non-gendered, third gender, two-spirit, bigender, and trans man and trans woman (Killermann, 2013, p. 1)."

Perhaps those of us entrenched in learning and adopting the most inclusive language possible are the intolerant ones, for John's sincerity about wanting to know and support students is more authentic than most in my peer group, as we police other's un-inclusive language for sport.

The Confederate Flag

My time on campus at Prairie View College revolves around one social justice issue more than any other, and experiences, conversations, and references to this situation are daily and sometimes hourly occurrences. Like a weeklong solo backpacking trip in the dry arid desert of "New" Mexico, concerned by necessity with acquiring potable water, my experience studying John's social justice leadership constantly returns to the elevated, maroon and white, ten year old pick-up truck sporting a full size Confederate flag and a United States flag anchored behind the cab. Like a crop duster spraying a toxic Monsanto-patented crop-resistant pesticide in its wake, the flags flap in the wind anytime the truck moves. The flag re-appeared on campus the week before my visit. John is simultaneously excited to share this news with me on my first day on campus, for it provides ample fodder for discussion, but he is also dismayed by the entire consuming situation.

The back-story John shares with me includes the flag appearing on campus a month earlier. Once alerted to the situation, John met with the student who reported he displays the flag as a symbol of "southern pride." John tried to explain to the student the negative impact the flag was having on campus, and the young white man from a rural area near the college took down the flag for three weeks. However, the man's friends

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gave him a hard time for taking down the flag, perhaps for the perception of giving into

political correctness or oppressive institutional powers. Therefore the flag remains a

component of the campus environment the entire time I am on campus. I saw it three

separate times, including my first and last days on campus.

During one of the many times John and I speak about the flag, he shares how his

personal and professional preferences, morals, and values impact the way he approaches

this, and every, contentious situation:

> Preference, morals, values to every scenario, and that would stand to reason in
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> this case, my preference would be for it to go (the Confederate flag). My biggest
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> preference would be to teach him why it should (go) and get him to voluntarily
>
> remove it rather than have me mandate it or direct it, or even to tell him, we now
>
> have a policy and a rule. I wouldn't want it to be that punitive. I would really like
>
> him to say, you know what, I learned, people have talked to me, I have seen the
>
> impact that it has, I am going to do it because it is right.

John seems resolved to the situation. The flag is likely going to remain a fixture of the

campus indefinitely. John is fearful that an upset student might take down the flag,

forcing him to initiate a judicial cause for a violation of the campus code of conduct for

theft. The view from John, the college, and the college system attorney is that the student

brandishing the Confederate flag is committing no violation of the campus code of

conduct. This seems to me subjective, a point to which John himself concedes. As the

chief arbitrator of the code of conduct, John is intimately familiar with the 15 page

document, which he has readily available in his office. The section specifically related to

student's behavioral expectations is prefaced by the following statement, the college commitment to diversity:

> Our Commitment to Diversity – (Prairie View College) works to foster a multicultural environment. We believe that a diverse college population provides all students opportunity to learn from a wide varety (sic) of people. This diversity adds an important and valuable dimension to the college experience that helps students succeed in the larger world.

Each staff and faculty member I met with at Prairie View College would undoubtedly support this statement. With this as the precursor, the code becomes specific. For example, a violation of the code of conduct for disruptive behavior is explained as, "Engaging in any disruptive behavior that negatively affects or impedes teaching or learning (regardless of mode of delivery or class setting); or disrupts the general operation of the college." When asked, John agrees that a student, perhaps a Black student, could make an argument that the Confederate flag on campus negatively affects their learning. If not disruptive behavior, the flag may constitute non-physical abuse as defined in the campus code, "Non-physical abuse, threats, intimidation, coercion, influence, or any unwelcome conduct in any form that is sufficiently severe, pervasive or persistent that it alters the conditions of the learning environment or employment." If not a threat or intimidation, one might accurately argue that the flag is harassment or discrimination based on race as defined in the code of conduct, "Discrimination or harassment on the basis of sex/gender, race, color, age, creed, national or ethnic origin, physical or mental disability, veteran status, pregnancy status, religion or sexual

orientation." John shares that if a student documents a complaint based on one of these behavior declarations, he will investigate and make a determination.

The climate on many college campuses is currently impacted by the litigious and active organization FIRE, the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education. The group has a mission to, "defend and sustain individual rights at America's colleges and universities." Prairie View College recently counted itself as one of hundreds of college campuses receiving a strongly worded letter from FIRE attorneys asserting their campus code of conduct is discriminatory due to its' subjectivity, and is therefore unconstitutional. The threatening letter states that if the campus does not alter its code of conduct, legal action will be brought against the campus. John shows me the letter he received from FIRE, to which the college president responded stating that campus policies are under review. This all provides the campus context for the institutional response to this Confederate flag.

Reactions to the flag on campus are as diverse as rural people's performances of the "cowboy" stereotype, ranging from full embodiment or rage, to non conformity or apathy. There is likely a very small group of active flag supporters or sympathizers, though a month into the ordeal no copycats have surfaced. John shares that one of the many student military veterans on campus is not offended by the Confederate flag, but by the improper display of the US flag at the same level, or slightly lower, than the secondary Confederate flag. When asked, the vice president for academic services shares that he is, "Surprised and pleased to the tolerance of (Prairie View College) students to the Confederate flag." I personally find myself desiring to initiate student activism in

response to the flag, perhaps a campaign both passively demonstrating visual support for diversity though counter-flags, and also advocating institutional change toward racial inclusivity. John and I also joke that as an outsider to the campus, perhaps I can just remove the flag when the guy is in class one day.

When first discussing the Confederate flag, John shows conviction, though some dissonance also surfaces. John, after consulting with the college appointed attorney, decides there is nothing he can or should do about the flag from a campus conduct perspective:

> You have to be decisive, you have to say this is how it is, I have made my mind up, I am going to move forward now that I have done this, like with this Confederate flag issue…it's a First Amendment right, and that's it. We have done our homework, we have researched, that doesn't mean that other aspects might not unfold that go beyond that, but that's our answer right now, and we can't sit here and second-guess ourselves.

This should not imply that the situation is easy for John, in fact the opposite. He recently evicted an African American woman from the residence halls for participating in a physical altercation. Her family drafted a letter of appeal, in which her mother asserted that the town surrounding Prairie View College was too racist for her daughter to find alternate housing, citing the Confederate flag as evidence, and that removal from the residence halls is therefore in effect, an expulsion from the campus. The situation haunts John, he is an incredibly empathetic person. However his core value of consistency

trumps any inclination of accommodation. The woman is no longer a student at Prairie

View College.

Toward the end of the observation period, our conversation again returns to the

Confederate flag, this time as part of a larger conversation about systemic and

institutional privilege, power, and oppression. When I ask about institutionalized

privilege at Prairie View College, John again reveals his internal struggle in an incredibly

authentic and vulnerable manner:

> I guess that, my mind just spins on that issue. We have talked a lot about
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> privilege, the privilege issue. I think for me it's more the issue of celebrating
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> diversity, and as we celebrate diversity, like I told you earlier, we are going to do
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> some things with our bulletin board to acknowledge that, but as soon as I start
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> celebrating diversity, inevitably, I will leave a component out. And somebody
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> will say, well where is my representative, my group. Or, we celebrate the
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> diversity, and yet, are we then, let me just say, me as a Chief Student Services
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> Officer, do I encourage our students to celebrate their diversity or do I model for
>
> them neutrality, such that I think they should also be showing neutrality? Is me
>
> modeling it, convey to them that I want them to model it as well? In other words,
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> so we are all hard to read. Or do I still encourage the celebration? If we are
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> celebrating diversity then at the same token we are right out there with that man
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> with the Confederate flag. His diversity could be his Southern roots, or his
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> heritage from General Lee or something like that, I mean is there a line you draw
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> with celebrations, or do the celebrations ever generate any anger or offensiveness,

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and if it does, is there an error in thinking in that, or is it another opportunity for

education?

The switch for John, from talking about privilege to this being more an issue about

celebrating diversity, represents a narrow view of campus inclusion. The language

reflects an unwavering commitment to aspirations of equality, rather than the more

nuanced concept of equity. It presents a focus on campus climate, rather than culture

(Museus, & Jayakumar, 2012). The opportunity for us to further unpack the difference

between these concepts organically arises when a sociology instructor on campus asked

John to come into his class to talk more about the campus response to the Confederate

flag.

Sociology 101

John walks from meeting to meeting with the drive of a coyote closing in on an

unsuspecting baby rabbit, and I struggle to match his long pace. John mentions that he,

"Dreads these kinds of conversations," a contrast to me being ecstatic about the

opportunity to observe him engaged in quintessential social justice leadership praxis.

John's great respect for authority manifests in several ways throughout the week, but one

is that already today, and it is only 10am, I have heard him say six times, "Our attorney

says…" as he explains the options, or lack thereof, he has in directing an institutional

response to the flag.

As we enter the non-descript, auditorium style classroom with a capacity of 50,

we are greeted by the casually dressed white man who is the instructor. He is sporting a

silver chain connecting his wallet to his pants, and his rolled up sleeves reveal tattoos on

both forearms. He appears to be in his late 30s, and I catch myself thinking that he

probably thinks he is a pretty cool college instructor. He greets John, I am introduced,

and I position myself in the front row, but not the middle, of the classroom trying to be

both a participant but not centering my presence as an outsider. The instructor appears to

have lazily conducted an internet search for "Confederate flag," and he projects the

poorly pixilated image on the white marker board in front of the classroom. The

projector image is not maximized, and the small image is dwarfed by the larger expanse

of white board on all four sides. When he is not pacing across the front of the small

classroom, John stands just to the left of the Confederate flag projection, though the flag

image is never actually mentioned during the entire class period. It sits, unmolested, like

a faucet left on in a public bathroom that no one bothers to turn off.

As the class begins, I ascertain that of the 28 students three are people of color

and two appear to be Black. The instructor briefly summarizes the character of the class

conversation from the previous session, and offers that the class is in agreement that the

Confederate flag is unacceptable and should be taken down. John seems relieved as he

hears this, perhaps he expected flag defenders, and when the class is turned over to him,

he begins with a few comments including, "Safety and feeling secure are important issues

on campus" and "It is not socially, but it is legally, acceptable." John again refers several

times to what the college attorney said about no legal standing to remove the flag, and I

find myself longing for John to be vulnerable by sharing some emotion-filled personal

reflections and thoughts. He flirts with this by offering that he is from the south, but

avoids presenting to the class any personal outrage or emotion. I think he can, and

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should, go deeper into his personal views, rather than appearing to be the campus public relations officer, a role he in some ways is required to play.

John's value of color-blind equality, surrounding a very race-conscious issue, again presents itself as he says multiple times that we need to look at all sides of an issue, and that everyone has valid points; an assertion which is occasionally echoed by the instructor. The implication that the Confederate flag toting pick-up truck driver has a valid perspective seems to embolden a thin, young, white woman with dark black hair sitting in the back row of the class with her straightened legs resting comfortably on the empty desk below hers. This woman raises her hand and admits, knowing that this will be unpopular, that she is friends with the Confederate flag man, and that he is actually a really good guy. Her poorly argued defense of the young man, focusing on how he does not intend to be offensive and declaring that he is not racist, upsets two older white women in the class who attack the defender. They argue that if he will not take down the flag, then the college should.

John offers a brilliant observation which has the potential to deepen the dialog when he offers that if he were to make the man take down the flag, an action he is clear he will not take, it would create a false sense of security on campus. This could have been a turning point in the conversation, for it may have allowed the class to begin to see themselves as self-actualized members of the Prairie View community who have agency to get involved in making the campus more inclusive. The students begin to approach this line of thinking as they ask John about the student code of conduct. John shares that if a specific student felt scared and unsafe by the presence of the flag, and they made a

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written complaint, he would entertain and investigate the complaint. Quickly, a Black man who came into the class late and appears to be in his 30s, stands up dramatically as he offers his views, the first person of color to speak, and only student to stand as he speaks. It is clear this man knows John, for he prefaces his comments with, "John, you know I like and respect you." I find myself getting excited for the "but" hoping it will invite more of John's emotion, thereby challenging the current abstract intellectualization of the discourse. The man proclaims that he is scared and offended. The one other non-Black person of color in the class then speaks up to concur, by offering that he is a multiracial Latino, and was scared last night playing soccer as the truck drove by. This further emboldens the two older white women who spoke earlier, as they collude with this line of thinking as they again vilify the man, and any defenders (shooting non-verbal eye daggers at the woman in the back row), of the Confederate flag. Sensing that the conversation may become counterproductively hostile, John and the instructor both offer a line of thinking which argues that if students attack the man displaying the Confederate flag, they are acting in the same offensive manner they are criticizing. John offers that if the man with the flag on his truck were to come into this class and the class attacks him for his beliefs, the class would be doing the same thing to him that he is doing to the campus; being offensive and marginalizing.

I find myself constantly shifting in my seat and repeatedly throwing back my head attempting to get one last drop out of my coffee mug, which has been empty for most of the class. I am not a member of this class, yet both John and the instructor are minimizing the students of color in the room who are saying they feel unsafe. Perhaps

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more damaging, they are not challenging the white students to see themselves as responsible for making campus more inclusive. Mostly, I am sick over the discussion being relegated to an individual level discussion about this student and the fixed-in time campus climate, rather than the socio-cultural campus culture impacted by hundreds of years of racial oppression. Equalitarian narratives of bi-directional discrimination perpetuate a reverse-racism myth, colluding with color-blindness to form an entrenchment in white supremacy. At the conclusion of the class, the instructor, John, and myself are left alone and the instructor asks me what I think. I share the thoughts described above, probably with a counter-productive righteousness confirming stereotypes of students at the elitist University of Denver. After my short mini-lecture, it is clear to me that I have embarrassed the instructor, and he demurely shares that he was trying to deepen the conversation. Feeling like a parent after spanking their child while telling them, "this hurts me more than it hurts you," I feel defeated, unresolved, and largely that the way I showed up in this short dialogue did more harm than good.

John graciously ignores my immature condemnation as we walk back to the Student Union. He tells me in the most sincere way I can imagine that "There is a perception that we are not an African American friendly campus, and I hate that, if I could change that, I would." I resist again showing up as the expert on social justice activism and telling John all of the ways he can work to change that perception, and I join in his dismay and empathize. My empathy tolerance is tested just seven minutes later, when we are in his office and a white woman who reports to John stops into his office to drop off paperwork. She asks where he just came from, and John briefly shares about the

class experience. The woman, clearly aware of the Confederate flag on campus because her response is premeditated as if she has offered the analogy before, says that people need to stop being so sensitive, and moreover, if she is offended by people displaying the Mexican flag in "America," it is the same as people being offended by the Confederate flag. The implication the she is offended by the Mexican flag, and the associated combination of nativism and xenophobia, is left unchecked as John validates her by stating that he himself is not easily offended. He further says that he wishes the issue would just go away, and that perhaps by talking about the flag we keep making it an issue. This contention ignores the Black man in class who actually asserted the opposite when he said this issue will continue to grow and that it may "blow up."

May I Take a Picture?

John continues to struggle with the flag throughout my time of observation, for I think he also recognizes this situation as the most concrete and contemporary view of his social justice leadership praxis I experience. During a break in data collection, still ruminating on this topic and his role as SSAO, he sent me the following in an e-mail:

> Like the idea of the Confederate flag and the African American population. I have my view, thus I believe it is the right view, and I think the student should remove the flag and the flag should be banned on the campus. HOWEVER….despite the fact that I am right in my thinking, is it truly the 'correct' view for a Student Services leader to take? Am I insensitive to SJ issues if I allow the student to display the flag? Am I insensitive to SJ issues if I insist that the student remove the flag? Things are not always as clear as we think.

By the nature of his role, and given the expanse of his supervisory portfolio, John has ample opportunity to operate in the gray, in a place where no easy answers appear. He is comfortable operating in this place of multiple truths, and is resistant to dramatic decisions which may perpetuate the idea of a single "correct" way of leading.

The first day on campus John told me about the Confederate flag, and showed me a picture on his desktop computer. Because we spoke so much about the flag during my time on campus, I fear that asking John to e-mail me the picture after data collection might reinforce a perceived obsession with the issue, which is embarrassing for John and much of the Prairie View College community. I therefore never ask, and as I leave campus on my last day of shadowing, I am resolved that I will not have a visual depiction of the flag as part of the data collected. Moreover, the student who owns the truck is in the Diesel Technology program, so he typically frequents the much smaller branch campus a few miles away. It is 5:15pm on a day not far removed from the Winter Solstice, so the sun is almost set in the western sky, and I long not to drive 15 minutes out of my way home to the satellite campus in search of the truck. The cold, windy, dark day feels slightly depressing, as I am both sad and excited to be concluding my data collection. As I pull away from campus I decide to make one last effort at spotting the truck, like a broke Las Vegas gambler throwing their last quarter in the last slot machine they see on their way out of a casino, and drive past the large student parking lot just west of the Student Union. Like a winning jackpot story, a darling of local news stations, I actually see the truck driving toward me as I leave the campus. I am now terrified. The non-descript, dark silver 2009 Toyota Corolla I am driving is unassuming, and I am now

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very grateful I have traded cars with my partner. My first day on campus I drove my 2002 silver Chevy Cavalier with a roof rack and more saliently polarizing bumper stickers including a pink, "I Support Planned Parenthood" sticker, a "Human Rights Campaign" sticker, and a "No on SB1070" sticker. I feared that my car marked me as an outsider, and perhaps even the target of violence, interesting given the lack of violence I have experienced in my life based on any of my social identities. I did have my back window shattered in my parked car six years ago, due to a LGBT friendly sticker I had in the window. Perhaps I carry this isolated incident with me more than I like to admit.

Knowing that I am not going to play "chicken" with this large diesel truck, and that I cannot get my phone out quickly enough to snap a picture, I pass the truck and stare at the driver. He looks younger than I imagined, his large black cowboy hat making his face and head look tiny. I also observe a large gun rack horizontally displayed and prominent behind the young man's body. I study the gun rack with my eyes, like a jouster narrowing my focus attempting to spot a rifle, as my car drifts to the left, closer and closer to the approaching truck. I refocus my attention to actually driving my car, just in time to swerve to the right to avoid crashing head first into the truck, as I think that texting and driving is not nearly as dangerous as jousting and driving. There are no other cars around and the driver seems similarly interested in me. Our eyes lock for what feels like an hour as we pass, each going approximately 15 miles per hour.

My heart is beating fast now as I keep driving and regroup. I pull over and watch the truck in my rearview mirror, flags flapping spectacularly, making them feel oversized. I am in luck, as the driver stops and parks near the parking lot I just vacated. I

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want a picture; I feel like I need a picture, so I park my car and stalk the truck on foot, wishing I was dressed in camouflage. As I get close to the truck, the loud idling engine reveals that he is still in the truck, staring at me.   Thirty-feet from the truck, I now feel naked and wish I was back in my car. At twenty-five feet I am close enough for an adequate picture, and even though the windows are tinted I can see him still staring at me. I am past the point of no return. I fear that just taking a picture may feel like a provocation, and while I am confident I can sprint back to my car in less than 30 seconds, I do not desire a dramatic car chase through a town where I really only know one person, John. So, I slowly walk closer, and he rolls down his driver window. Fuck. The window lowers slowly, revealing a manual function, and I am acutely distracted as I think back without clarity to recall the last car I owned without power windows. Once the window is down I clear my throat nervously as I attempt to perform as a bass when I am really a tenor as I blurt out, "Hey man, can I take a picture of your truck?" He nods his head, black cowboy hat and all, and then rolls up his window. I quickly take the picture (Figure 8), and scurry back to my car like a 55-year old white suburban walk-runner in the last 50 yards of a community fundraiser for the local high school marching band.

Figure 8: Confederate Flag

99.98%

The overwhelming whiteness I experience during my time at Prairie View College is tremendous. During my time on campus I am in meetings with approximately 118 people, many of whom, such as the vice president for academic services, are in multiple meetings. Of these 118 people, based on my best guess related to race, 7 are people of color, constituting 6%. Meetings at Prairie View College are even more racially homogenous than I expect, and it strikes me that the highest level meeting I attend, the president's leadership team, consisting of vice presidents and deans, is 100% white. If this homogeneity is a surprise, the 2008 statistic about faculty racial representation is a shock similar to the National Football League's all-time highest scoring offense of the Denver Broncos scoring only eight points in the 2014 Super Bowl.

In 2008, 99.98% of Prairie View College's full time faculty members were Caucasian. Apparently the person in Institutional Research compiling this report felt the need to offer some explanation or contextualization of this number, explaining in the publically available demographic report linked on the college website, "Despite these low numbers, (Prairie View College) continues to solicit diverse applicants to fill vacancies." Unpacking this assertion, it seems the college is implying, or perhaps directly stating, that "diverse applicants" are applying, they are just not being selected for positions.

The narrative about people of color applying for jobs at Prairie View College is that they do not apply. The vice president for academic services (a similar position to provost) who has been at the college for a few decades offers an anecdote fueling this narrative. He shares a story from several years ago when the college coordinated an on-campus interview for an African American woman for a faculty position. The woman was slated to arrive in town on a Saturday, spend Sunday getting a campus and town tour, and then interview and leave on Monday. Apparently the woman came, checked into her hotel, and then quickly checked out and left the town without communicating with campus officials. This story is presented as if the college cannot do anything about its location and the way people may interpret it, and they have resolved to a passive acceptance of racial homogeneity. John shares this view, stating that it is hard to get people of color to apply for staff jobs, and while the student services staff is probably more diverse than the faculty, most of the racial diversity is concentrated at the lower-end of the organizational hierarchy. He shares:

It's always a desire to try to attract people of color. I think that is partly working against our community norms with that. That's troubling to me. I wish we could attract more applicants, but we just don't. Sometimes in our pool of applicants, you do not necessarily know it by looking at the application pool, but you bring in people, and person after person, Caucasian, Caucasian, Caucasian. Well, we work with what we have. I scratch my head on that, but I don't know, I don't know what to do to attract them.

During this same conversation John reveals that on a recent trip to a college campus in the nearest big city, Denver, he saw a lot of "really hip people" who he wishes he could attract to work at Prairie View College. If this comment reveals more a feeling that the current campus employees are not "hip," or that people of color in the city are, is unclear.

When talking about student racial diversity I am shocked to learn that John is unsure if white students and students of color graduated or transferred to gradation somewhere else, at similar rates. Prairie View College has narrowed the gap between white and student of color attendance in the past five years. However, closer inspection of institutional data reveal a substantial decrease in the percentage of Hispanic students in the last eight years (from 12% to 8%), a slight decrease in the Native American student percentage (0.6% to 0.5%), a slight increase in Asian student percentage (0.4% to 0.8%), and a significant increase in the percentage of African American students (0.6% to 4.5%). These data are interesting; the question of retention and graduation perhaps reveal a more compelling story about campus climate and culture. A quick search of state higher education data reveals a 2011 report stating that Prairie View College graduates, or has

its students graduate at a transfer institution, at a rate of 36.4% in two years, notably

higher than the state-wide graduation rate average for two year colleges of 26.1%. The

graduation rate is much higher for females (42.4%) than males (30.6%). The graduation

rate is highest for white students (40.3%), followed by Hispanic students (35%), Asian

students (16.7%), and Black students (12.5%). No Native American students entered the

Fall 2007 cohort, so no data are available for these students. These data are not

cumbersome to locate, and could be used to motivate new policy and procedures.

Christian Privilege?

While racial privilege is under-discussed on campus, and when discussed is

mostly related to sports or a lack of racial diversity, Christian privilege is even less

examined. This is interesting, given that the independent Colorado Christian University

has a building on the Prairie View campus. When I ask about Christian privilege, John

affirms that it does exist on campus and in the community. Our exchange about Christian

privilege includes the following:

> **John:** We have had times when we have discussed that, I think…At our
>
> commencement our students lead a payer. We don't do it, they do it. If they say
>
> we would like to have a male and a female, one do the benediction and one the
>
> invocation, we allow that. It's still a pretty significant community norm. I don't
>
> know that it's a campus norm, but because the campus is in the community it
>
> overlaps. We have talked about the issue of holidays and Christmas. That's our
>
> baseball calendar right there (he points to the calendar on his office wall), and it's
>
> the baseball team that put that together and every month is a different picture of

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the team and yeah, it says Merry Christmas, and some people are more

conscientious, or conscious, of not using the word Christmas. I think our HR puts

out everything with holidays, it just depends on the person who it comes from.

As we start to decorate for the season you will see Christmas here and there, and

you will see holiday here and there, it is not all one or another, you will see both.

Ryan: Have their ever been religious intolerance related issues?

John: Not at all. I have never seen religious intolerance against any group. We

have not had a lot of Muslim students that have been overt about being a Muslim.

We have had some who have dressed in Muslim attire, and they have not, to my

knowledge, been exposed to any type of conflict. If they have, they did not report

it to me, and it should make it to me. I really feel like it should make it to me, as I

would not allow it at all.

Ryan: Any Swastikas in the res halls?

John: Not recently. We have had, when I was a counselor, many many years ago,

you would see some swastikas…And we have had some KKK graffiti, the graffiti,

I don't know that we have had anything publicly displayed, and that graffiti, we

have to take care of immediately, as soon as we are aware of it, we take care of it.

Here again John initially recalls no instances of racial intolerance on campus, but when

prompted recalls some issues with Swastikas and the Ku Klux Klan.   Perhaps these

incidents are coded as more racial than religious, but the lack of critique of a Christian

narrative is notable throughout my time on campus.

My observation period occurs in late November around the time the campus, and John's office in particular, are decorating for Christmas. Because of this, John frequently asks my thoughts on his office and the campus's celebration of Christmas. After I share my thoughts about Christian privilege, identifying myself as non-Christian but benefiting from Christian privilege because my family of origin celebrates Christian holidays, John responds:

I am not easily offended…but I am sensitive to the student who is, and, but I am also sensitive to the student who says, well, why can't I say Merry Christmas, they are offended by the word Christmas, and I think well, good point, and maybe that is my lack of depth in my thinking, because I think you are talking a little more about the colonization of things, the Christian heritage, and going back much much much further historically. And I guess I look at things so on the surface, but I realize there is so much underlying feeling and emotion beneath the layers.

This topic of discussion, Christian privilege, and the larger social and political context in the United States, are of great interest to John. He struggles with the idea of Christian privilege, and after a break in our observation sent me the following in a very thoughtful e-mail, reflecting his thought process:

If you wish me 'Happy Holidays' and I wish you 'Merry Christmas,' am I being insensitive or are you? Truth be told, to do it right, I should likely extend 'Happy Holidays' to you, and you should extend 'Merry Christmas' to me, so that we can recognize and honor the person to whom we are greeting. I am not sure that

neutrality in its purest sense allows for freedom of expression as much as it guards

the feelings of those who have experienced inequity over time. With Christmas

again, do we remove all aspects of faith/religion/spirituality from higher ed

settings at the exclusion of acknowledging the beliefs of those who have faith

practices, or do we simply allow all expressions to be stated—from Hanukkah, to

Kwanzaa, to Christmas, to Secularism, to Atheism. If we say no to all in keeping

with neutrality, are we still yielding to the belief system of SOME, thus failing to

be sensitive to SJ issues? Do we create a counter culture of offended people when

all references to all belief systems are stifled in the name of neutrality?

After my data collection is complete, and before the Christmas holiday, John is proud to

send me a picture of the "winter holiday" bulletin board he designed (Figure 9).
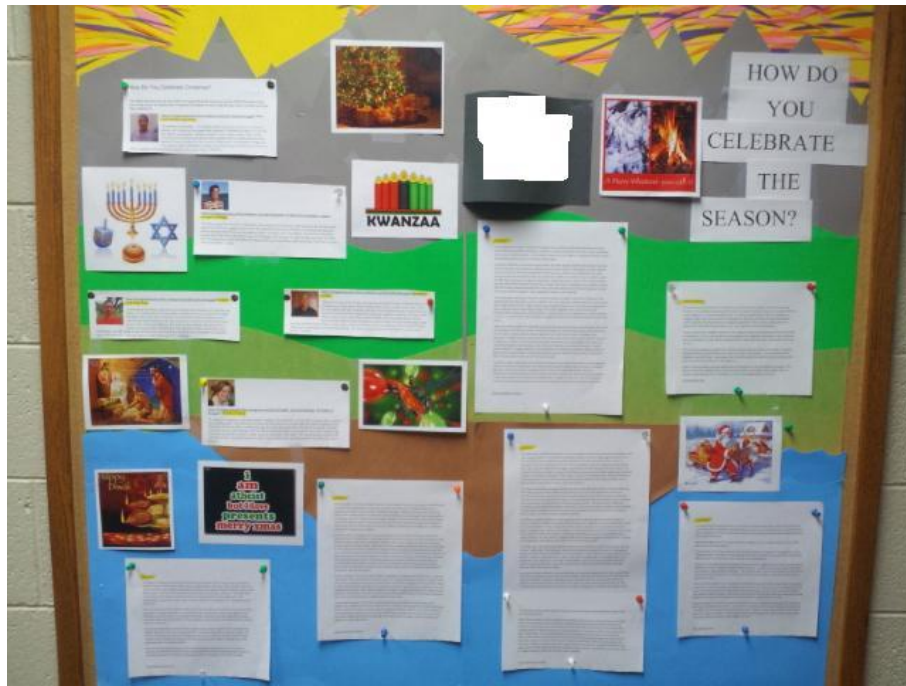
Figure 9: Bulletin Board

John reports receiving several positive comments about the board, the first time in his tenure such an intentional display of several winter holidays is created, and even shared that the college president saw the board and complimented him.

Scary White Man?

Professional development is one way SSAOs can expand their skills and tools in implementing social justice initiatives on college campus. Unfortunately, little such training exists, and it is typically self-directed and under-funded. When asked about his training for social justice leadership, John acknowledges that his formal training is limited. The exchange unpacking this is highlighted below:

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John: I went to a dean's academy, and we had a little bit of training in the dean's academy. I mean it was a workshop about how to deal with students of different issues, and we talked about what the issues are that might come up regarding social justice. Really when I was the counselor and the dean of students working through BACCHUS (Boosting Alcohol Consciousness Concerning the Health of University Students), BACCHUS provided more on social justice and collegiate issues than anything our system has trained me in, nothing on our campus. A lot of it has been reading about what is happening in the news, staying up to date with incidents that might be, maybe it's not in (our state), it could be anything in the nation, but you read about how they respond to them. Our system attorney is very very good about making vice presidents of student services aware of court cases that are pending or decisions that have been made at the college level, sometimes lawsuits that have had their outcome, we hear about those. But really the SJ issues are not at the forefront of our radar, like I have made them the forefront of mine. I read about things, but our system has not made them the forefront of theirs.

Ryan: So where does your interest come from?

John: Well, law enforcement, from counseling, I would say it's partly a passion for fairness. A voice of students to be heard when they perceive they are not being heard. My desire for the campus to be a safe haven for students.

When talking about BACCHUS, John vividly recalls a BACCHUS conference he attended in Wyoming with a national diversity speaker, Jess Pettitt. John depicts Jess

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beginning her speech acknowledging that as a Queer woman, she is nervous flying into

Wyoming, fearing for her physical safety. She further explains that white men are the

focus of her uneasiness given the negative impact white men have previously had on her.

When retelling this story, John shows genuine surprise that he, a tall white man, could be

seen as a potential threat without someone knowing him. He decides to take up Jess on

her offer to correspond via social media, so he Tweets and asks if she is really scared of

him, a six foot five inch white man. When Jess responds in the affirmative, it rocks

John's identity as a universally welcoming person. Interestingly, John is not defensive or

upset by Jess sharing her feelings, but embraces the learning as an opportunity to

critically reflect on how he is perceived by others.

This deep concern for how others perceive him and his core value of equality,

cannot be identified as occurring because of one specific life experience or event. The

social justice aspirations rather arose organically throughout his life:

I don't care if its women, if its minorities, I don't care if its homosexuals, I don't

care if its students from another culture. You don't want them to step into a

hostile environment. To me it was just, it was a given. Being in the South, I

mean I heard even in my own family gatherings, the n-word, the f-word with

regard to homosexuals. It's like, really? Really? (laughter). So I don't know

that I was trained. I was just always appalled, always, always, appalled. I wish I

had a better story to tell you.

The story is more than adequate, and whatever happened for John, it is clear that he has a

deep-seeded and life-long desire to making the places he works as inclusive as possible

for all people.

Mario or Maria?

One morning when I arrive at John's office around 8:30am, he shares that he

received a text message late the previous night from a hall director about a resident who

"attempted suicide." Much of the morning is subsequently devoted to gathering

information, particularly about when and how the student, who was medically cleared to

leave the hospital early that morning, returned to campus. John consults with the college

attorney, who says that the college cannot sanction the student for engaging in suicidal

behavior. John is disappointed that he cannot use the campus code of conduct to address

this student's behavior. During one of the phone calls with the attorney, John puts her on

speaker phone so I can listen to the conversation. The attorney encourages John to ask

the student to return home and not remain at the college. The attorney hopes that this is

best for the student, and also acknowledges that it will help relieve the college of some

responsibility (though I think she meant liability). Because the semester is close to its

conclusion, the decision is made that John will meet with the student, Maria, and

encourage her to withdraw for the semester. John coordinates a meeting with the student

and the counselor at the college who she has worked with in the past. The plan is to

conference call in the student's mother during the meeting.

Right before Maria comes to the office, the director of residence life shares with

John that Maria prefers to be called Mario and to use male pronouns. This does not seem

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to be of any concern, and John meets with Mario. He is able to quickly build rapport

with the student, and approaches the situation with a warm empathy which even made me

want to tell him personal and vulnerable details about my life. John seems a little

nervous at times, perhaps because he is talking 1-1 with Mario with the counselor and me

awkwardly staring at the two of them less than four feet away, but not participating in the

conversation. The student shares that he does not want to withdraw, that he really likes

some of his classes, and that home is not the healthiest place for him. Despite the college

attorney encouraging John to persuade Mario to leave, he respects this decision, and tells

Mario about the college and community resources available. Mario's mother is not able

to be reached in the meeting, though John did speak with her after Mario leaves.

When I ask about the interaction, John candidly shares, "When I talked to Mario I

referred to him as Mario and him. When I talked to his mother I referred to him as her

and Maria." Throughout the week as we again speak about Mario, it becomes clear that

John and his residence life director lack a strong understanding of trans* issues, including

the conflation of transgender and transsexual, and the associated conflation of gender and

sex. However, they are both clearly trying to understand and to empower students:

> Sometimes…my value of kindness, my value of having a heart for students comes
>
> into the conversation. But then with Mario, still, conveys that kind value. I could
>
> have been very impersonal in that discussion, I could have said, here are the facts.
>
> And there is nothing wrong with that approach, and some VPs might. I do have
>
> the value of wanting to personally connect with that student, and so, in that case
>
> my value would come in. But it was not necessary, it might have been easier to

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be more direct, and say, I really want you to withdraw. I could have been very

emphatic about that. I was also, that was really not the strongest message of my

conversation I think.

Mario's gender identity aside, John sees him as a student of concern. John approaches

the situation not with a paternalistic or patronizing mandate, but with an empowering and

loving empathy, which he calls his value of kindness.

Beyond John's empathy and empowerment on the individual level, perhaps more

encouragingly, he uses this as an opportunity to initiate lasting institutional change. For

example, both John and his residence life director several times indicate that the situation

with Mario reflects the need for the campus to have a gender-neutral or gender-free

housing option. This is not just a passing comment, for the very next day I observe John

mention to the college president that the college needs to start looking at a gender-neutral

housing option for students. The issue of gender-neutral housing on college campuses is

polarizing. For example, the large land grant university in the same state as Prairie View

College has largely been ignoring the issue for decades, while knowing trans* students

are on campus, fearing repercussions from the state board of trustees which may

adversely impact university funding from the state. Neither John, nor the president, share

similar concerns. I ask John about this:

> **Ryan**: I heard you mention to the president…the possibility of starting gender-
>
> neutral housing. I think this is incredibly progressive social justice leadership.
>
> **John**: And we may not face it every year, we are small. But if you face it even
>
> once, you have to have a plan, and we are facing it. Again, is Mario, would Mario

be better placed in a male residence hall? He would say yes. Would the men of

that residence hall agree? Probably not. I would say the majority of them

wouldn't. Would their family? There are so many dynamics. So to get to that

neutral place. That gender or transgender neutral facility where people don't care.

But, would they be open to any guy or girl who wants to live in it just because it is

transgender hall? A lot of issues. I included him in our dialog because any

serious issue, because we are small enough, maybe a president at a university

level would not have needed to know about that. But in our setting we are small

enough and he wants to know about that. He and I talk nearly every day, or cross

paths in some form or another…I am glad you observed that.

John downplays the situation, and perhaps would not on his own name this as social

justice activism.

John demonstrates strong leadership related to trans* students on campus, yet he

is caught off guard by a related question I ask. When I ask him if he is aware of any staff

or faculty members on campus who are out as LGBT he responds, "(4 second pause) I am

not aware of lesbians or gays (3 second pause) in our employment (3 second pause), at

all. I was pondering, and I don't have knowledge of it, not at all." Prairie View College

has approximately 80 faculty members (two-thirds are full time), and over 100 full time

employees. It is therefore likely that many LGBT people are contained within these

ranks. That John is unaware of any of them being LGBT, may be for a variety of

reasons. And, from the response to the question, it appears John had never considered the

reality.

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Golf Snob?

John offers to give me a driving tour of notable college assets in the region. We drive by the North Campus, where the automotive technology program and the baseball fields reside. A college owned fire truck is noticeable from afar, as is the truck displaying the Confederate and United States flags. We continue our tour as we visit the campus owned and operated golf course, one of two in the town. Having played golf, albeit poorly, at approximately 40 different golf courses in my life, I am struck by what seemed like an inaccurate description of the course by John as "beautiful," "really nice," and "challenging." I did not contradict this assertion, but am distracted by the relatively flat, brown fairways (brown is to be expected given the time of year) absent of water hazards and flanked by outdated construction and poorly maintained cart paths. John shares that the course has become a resource-vacuum for the college, which loses money on the operation annually.

As we leave the course, John reflects on a model of operation, though he does not call it this, which reinforces his commitment to loyalty, integrity, and consistency. John says that when he has a complex decision to make on an important issue, he reflects on what is good, and then what is right. John privileges the latter. He recognizes that what he personally views as good, may not always be right as judged by policies, procedures, and legal precedent. John has come to understand the impact the Confederate flag has on campus, on students of color, and most specifically on Black students. He views making the student take down the flag as a good thing to do. However he feels stuck, because campus policy does not forbid the flag, so making the student take it down is not the right

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thing to do. John's views of what is right are directly connected to his values of integrity and consistency.

Living in the Gray

While John can operate functionally living in gray areas about things like how the campus should celebrate Christmas, when it comes to campus conduct issues John aims to strictly adhere to the written policies, and the direction of the college attorney. When I ask what would happen if he is more subjective, perhaps not lauding consistency, he replies that there is a, "higher price for someone in my position to pay for being inconsistent, versus everybody gets the same treatment." When further prompted about consistency at the cost of viewing a situation holistically, John brilliantly reveals the impact of this tension in a provocative monologue:

> I told you earlier that I do not want to make decisions that I have regrets about. I have regrets about outcomes, sometimes. I have regrets that, these evictions, we have done quite a few of these evictions. Last week and the week before I think we evicted five students. Three were African American, one was a white male, and one was an Asian Hispanic male. So it wasn't anything racial, but I regret it when decisions convey, even if it's a misperception, when people get a perception that I am treating a particular race unfairly. And I know my heart, I know my thinking, I know my head, I know my passion. It's never the issue of, racism never comes into my decisions, but the issue, it's been perceived as such (3 second pause) torments me. I wish sometimes we did not have to evict. I wish eviction for fighting was not our standard protocol. It has become the norm, it has

become what we do. And I think to myself what, and again this is where I find guilt in my thinking, knowing that eviction is the result for fighting, it seems like our African American population engage in more fights, for some reason, I don't have any idea why, but when they come in as inexperienced freshman, a college campus, maybe that is something that was prominent in their communities back home, in their schools, when they transition from high school to college. Now you are in a college setting, it is unfair, in my opinion, to expect someone's behavior to just boom (snaps fingers), boom (snaps fingers), change, because now I am 18 (snaps fingers), now I am at a college (snaps fingers), now I am not home (big sigh). And if fighting was a reaction in their past life, before the college, I can't necessarily expect it not to still be a reaction at this point, and yet as soon as they fight they are gone from the halls, and when they are gone from the residence halls, in this community, frequently that means they withdraw, and they go home (4 second pause). I hate that. I don't mind the fact that there is consistency. Like I said, it can be Caucasian students who fight, Asian students who fight, guys, girls, African American, it does not matter who fights, they go. But the percentage of our evictions tends to lean toward the African American population, which represents the fact that that is the fighting population by virtue of how it all falls. Therefore I am viewed as someone who evicts Black students at the drop of a hat (snaps fingers), (5 second pause). That is a concern to me, and I don't know, yet, how to break that perception or how to remedy that perception (pace slows, tone decreases). Even just sitting here talking about it, I just, the trouble in

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my head and my heart riles up. But, right now, that's our policy. Right now

that's our practice.

John clearly becomes emotional as he reflects on the tension of applying the student

code, while recognizing that people's life experiences cause behavior to manifest in

different ways. John did not say that he and the college are forcing people to adopt and

live by a set of rules construed to uphold and maintain white privilege and supremacy.

But, I think he understands that functionally this is the case.

One of the ways John rationalizes his consistent decision making, is that he is

following the direction of the college attorney. For good reason, as colleges and

universities in the United States have been under increased scrutiny for how campus

codes of conduct are administered, and the fear of a lawsuit is not irrational fear. John

explains:

> Our attorney has told us in our code of conduct and sanctioning practices, the
>
> most protection we would ever have in a court of law is consistency or practice. (4
>
> second pause). Those words echo in my head. I hear them constantly.
>
> Consistency of practice, consistency of practice. But. I struggle with this one
>
> Ryan, I really do. I mean, you read those letters from those kids I evicted, those
>
> families…oh my gosh…I am so sorry.

John is sincerely sorry. Perhaps his eviction decisions would be easier if he approached

them from a color-blind narrative, like his colleague who has only seen one racial

incident on campus in 17 years. But John is willing to see the gray, the limitations of

consistency, and at times this causes him acute anguish.

John further understands that upholding policy is sometimes at odds with his core identity as an advocate for students:

I would rather be an advocate of students than an advocate of policy. That contradicts what I just told you about the student evictions, because we evict, and maybe that is why I am tormented, because I really want to be the advocate for the student and to give them every opportunity to grow, and to learn from experiences. But, policy hovers around my head sometimes. And again, that's why I struggle, because my heart says give this kid another chance, and my head says, do the right thing with regard to the overall message that you are sending to students that safety of everybody on this campus is the priority. So you can be an advocate for students on an individual basis, you can be an advocate for students on the basis of the total population, and I think there are times when one trumps the other.

While John offers that there may be times advocating for an individual student trumps being consistent with policy, I am unable to uncover any such examples. John, as he often does, asks me my thoughts on subjectivity and consistency. I offer that I tend to be more subjective, and that I try to contextualize situations by thinking about institutional privilege, power, and oppression. To this John responds:

Well I really think to myself, its gotta almost be the concept of all or nothing. And I don't, like when we were talking about the homosexual student and you would rather be more responsive to them, possibly at the cost of turning away somebody who is spiritually minded. I understand that. In that sense I probably

would too. I think with regard to music, and culture, you know, let it all be

experienced. And learn, I mean, if people want to sing about the birth of Christ at

Christmas in a neutral setting, fine. But let them also have performances with

other genres in music, and other styles, and other messages, it cannot be one

sided.

Here John embraces the kind of multicultural "tossed salad" metaphor, where each

person or culture brings something valuable to the larger picture. While laudable, this

view does not perhaps give space for an understanding of historical and systemic

oppression. John, if he is so inclined, could operate in a grayer and more subjective area

as the head judicial officer on campus charged with administering the student code of

conduct. He may want to as an abstraction, but clearly he has been successful this far in

his career with "consistency of practice" as his primary mode of operation.

Not a Business Partner

Toward the end of my observation period, truly embracing the research

experience, John decides to engage in a playful experiment with his wife.   During an

interview he offers the observation that:

I notice you use the term partner a lot. I know you are intentional about that. And

you know that when people hear that, they are going to wonder, does he have a

wife or does he have a husband. And you don't care (laughter) I use the word

wife, and so I was going to humorously, when we go over to see the art exhibit,

my wife will be there, and maybe I will introduce her as my partner, and she will

be like, what…I will play around with her a little if you do not mind. I am not

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making fun, it's just, what would it be like if I used this word that I have never

used, in my 27, 28 years of marriage to introduce her. I have never used that.

John introduces me to his partner in the dated campus art gallery with mostly faculty art,

much of it Christian iconography. His astute wife picks up on the word game

immediately, and reacts with a playful striking of John's arm and a loud, "John, what are

you doing!" John and I share a smile, and then enjoy a pleasant 20 minutes poorly

pretending to be art connoisseurs.

Internal Processing

I conclude this narrative with some of the electronic communication exchange

between John and myself when I was not on campus. Both of us are better at internal

processing, and each day I took copious notes based on my observations. This afforded

us the opportunity to exchange ideas and thoughts, and to unearth rich data. The first e-

mail came during an observation break period:

November, 2013

Ryan,

I have been evaluating "stuff" in the (campus) environment, as well as my own

personal office space—the art in the gallery that had religious nuances; the

baseball calendar that read "Merry Christmas" on the December page; the

(college) mascot—explorer, settler, gun-carrier, and more; picture in my office of

wife and family that convey my marital and family status, and most likely my

sexual preference; statements of faith here and there; degrees on the wall that

show I came from the South. I would like to hear your take on these things a bit

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more when we meet again. I am open to personal growth in the realm of SJ, but I am also one who values personal expression. However, is my office environment the place for that expression? While I do not strive to convey personal neutrality in my life in my encounter with others—i.e., it's ok for people to know I am married to a woman, or that I celebrate Christmas (be it, in faith or in secularism)—how much, if any, of those things should a Student Services leader convey to students? Not that it would be WRONG to convey them, but that it might lead to oppression in students if I were to convey them. It might mean they form a preconceived idea about me causing them to find me someone to whom they are unable to relate.

I apply this principle to the approaching holiday season, but it can be applied to many situations. I am highly supportive of our transgender situations and the needs these students have, as well as the need to educate students about the dynamics of social justice that surround these needs; I am likewise supportive of our African American students who feel threatened and oppressed on our campus, but I extend the right to the White rural agricultural student to drive pick-up trucks and wear boots and rodeo belt buckles if they desire. And the lesbian and gay students should be housed in a manner that makes them feel comfortable. I support that, as well as their right to openly demonstrate their sexual identity. And our straight student population needs to be accepting and understanding—in no way bullying or harassing. But can students have values that contradict some of these principles that I apply to these populations? I venture to say "yes they can."

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My job is not necessarily to make sure everyone thinks like me, but to be sure that people treat each other equitably. Some people may have spiritual reasons why they oppose gay lifestyles. I support their right to have those beliefs. But SJ must still be extended to everyone, despite the differences in belief systems.

Higher education is so rich and so full of variety and diversity of persons and thinking. I love it for that reason. Disagreements, debates, arguments, and total rejection of ideology are to be expected. I welcome it. It makes life interesting and keeps us ALL thinking. But no one should ever be the victim of a crime or a prank or a vile word or insult or be ostracized because of their different lifestyle or their different culture or their different philosophy or theology. THAT is what I need to educate students about. In the end, I want to teach students to live harmoniously and with understanding toward others. Think independently and individualistically, but do not hold one's self in higher regard above anyone else. I think I am rambling now, so I will close. But I look forward to talking again next week.

When John and I meet next we pick up right away on the topics discussed in his e-mail. For the first and only time during any of our conversations, John is so engaged he interrupts me occasionally:

John: I don't care if you call me white or Caucasian. Or Anglo, I don't care, but some people do have a preference. And I think the thing that makes it so easy for me, personally, is so little offends me. I consider the fact that everybody is all

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over the place, and if somebody says that tall skinny white man, fine, whatever works for you to describe me….But I don't expect everybody to be like me either. If we were all the same how dull would that be, Ryan? That's why I asked you if there is one way we should strive to be. I mean, as an aspiring CSSO, would you have a picture of your wife in your office? Would you have a picture of your children? I mean you have bumper stickers.

Ryan: I would not put up my Green Party sticker in my office….it's a privilege to put up a picture of my opposite sex partner.

John: It's not equitable. They have the right to do it, not the equitable opportunity to do it.

Ryan: I am aware of when I am being political. Or am I just blindly living in my privilege and not critiquing it. Am I just putting up really Christian Christmas stuff because this is what I value and I don't care what over people value...

John: (interrupting), and that was not that, I promise you. That was just stuck up there as one more thing. I am really tempted to switch them out now, because I realize it's on my door, it's the only thing that's on my door, because that's, when you close it, the office is still out there, it is really office decorations.

Ryan: But it's like the picture of (pointing to a picture of John's wife) or the Christmas decorations.

John: I am not ashamed of it, but I do not want to necessarily shove it down anyone's throat.

Ryan: If I was a non-Christian coming into your office, and I was withdrawing, and part of why I was withdrawing was because I did not feel comfortable or included on campus because of perhaps a non-privileged identity, that could contribute to me feeling like this is not a place for me…

John: (interrupting) And that would never be, I would, I mean, in my heart, in my heart, my thoughts, my head, I would never, never want to convey that. I also, I do know that, largely our population is not offended by that. If that became so tremendously…..I mean does that offend you? It could. Does it?

Ryan: It does, yeah. But I think like you I am able to brush it off. The reason it offends me is because it is an opportunity for me to advocate for people who it might offend, but they are already the target for scrutiny, so they might not say anything.

John: And I understand that. I just hope people don't get hostile. It leads to hostility and arguments and I am never one to bicker. I really would much rather, I hate to say this, I am so in the middle with so many things, if these people are on this side of the line are very very troubled, and these people on this side of a line are very, I will do what I can to alleviate their anger, rather than try to explain it to them, especially if it is about me personally. But if it is an educational opportunity, like that flag situation, I had two Johns in that room with me. I had me personally, and me VP, and, we don't agree. The VP has to say this, the personal me would say this.

Ryan: It's the good versus right

John: That's exactly right. You got it. And that's where I say, where do we, if I
don't always agree, then I say that's the VP in me I have to accept. And that's
when I don't get angry. I don't get angry at things like that.

It is clear that when John as an individual and John as the Vice President of Student
Services disagree, the VP wins. I think this happens a lot, the disagreement, and I believe
it may happen more after my visit to campus given the questions I asked related to social
justice and privilege. I think this is fortunate, as John will always need to figure out how
to operate in the gray.

I finally conclude this narrative with the last correspondence John and I had via e-
mail. The e-mail represents description, with little interpretation, which is be offered at
the conclusion of the narrative married with evaluation. I leave the exchange unedited
and un-narrated, as a piece of unadulterated data which arose after weeks, days, and
hours of co-researching social justice leadership praxis, as performed by John Stenson, at
Prairie View College.

December, 2013

Mr. Stenson,

When you reached out to me via e-mail with your interest in being a participant in
for my dissertation research, I was skeptical. You had mentioned that the college
president encouraged you to reach out to me, and I therefore assumed, almost
certainly erroneously, that you were asked to participate due to some kind of
social justice leadership deficit. There are very few heterosexual white men in my
life who I truly respect John, perhaps a character flaw of mine, and you have

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quickly ascended to the top of that list. I am not sure why (the president) asked

you to participate, but I see it as irrelevant. I have learned more from and with

you than I could have ever expected.

In my research methods classes, we have spoken a lot about the terms we use to

describe the "people we research." Labels such as participant, researched, and

subject reify the power dynamics between researcher and researched. I thought

participant was the most empowering and hopefully accurate, so I used that in my

dissertation proposal. However, after spending six work days with you John, I

have come to see the label co-researcher as the most appropriate descriptor of our

research relationship. Our interviews, much due to your prompting, became

conversations. I found myself never knowing when to turn on or off the tape

recorder, as our informational conversations were often more provocative than the

actual "interviews." I believe that together we co-constructed knowledge, as we

went back and forth about things like the Confederate flag and Christmas

decorations. It was flattering and honestly a little disconcerting initially, for you

to ask me questions and advice about how you were doing your job. This is the

highest compliment I could imagine John, and I hope that I had something useful

to share.

I have pages of notes, hours of audio tape, dozens of pictures, and immeasurable

thoughts after the six days we spent together. I am appreciative beyond words for

the incredible, authentic, and vulnerable access you gave me to your life John,

both personal and professional; though it became clear that these aspects of life are not, nor should they be, compartmentalized. I hope I am able to offer you a written product at the end of this experience which justifies the time and energy you devoted showing me how you engage with social justice leadership as an SSAO. In the likely case that I fall short of this endeavor, I pray tell my most sincere gratitude can help fill the expectation gap.

I look forward to remaining in touch John. As I mentioned, I will share with you my transcripts, initial codes, narrative, and final dissertation so that we can continue to co-construct knowledge as your schedule and interest level allows. Thanks also for being interested in perhaps attending my dissertation defense, I will be sure to keep you in the loop about this as I get closer.

Respectfully and Appreciatively,

ryan

December, 2013

Thank you, Ryan, for the kind words. I was amused when I read of skepticism and assumptions about (the president's) encouragement for me to connect with you. Actually, he left it entirely up to me. There was never any reference to social justice deficit. Perhaps it is due to my own lack of self-awareness that I did NOT form that assumption! Hmmm! Haha!!

I am glad I "agreed" to participate in your research. Our conversations were delightfully rich and quite stimulating. As much as you appreciated the

opportunity to observe, I in turn valued your input following your observations of my work. You are clearly well-researched on the topic, so your assessment of what you observed was important to me. I didn't mean to put you in the position of feeling like you were giving me "advice", but I know at times it seemed like that was how things ended up. Most of the time following my tasks, I just wanted to know what you thought and what you observed. And if you had critiques, I was very interested in those. Although I do realize that was not what you were here to do, it was a valuable exercise for me.

I would love to keep up with your ongoing research, and your final dissertation. I appreciate your willingness to share your findings with me along the way. Beyond that, I would just like to remain in touch. I welcome the opportunity to converse with you anytime. As I said above, I thoroughly enjoyed our stimulating conversations and I hope we can engage in equally rich conversations in the future. Feel free to communicate with me anytime you like—either professionally or casually or both. I welcome it!

Thanks again for your words. I remain interested and I look forward to meeting up again soon.

John

A Solid Foundation for Transformation

The following section presents both evaluation and thematics. These observations are sometimes directly related to the narrative presented above, and at times stem from

data not yet presented. The focus on evaluation and thematics below is dwarfed in length when compared to the narrative, in large part because these two aspects of educational criticism and connoisseurship are not compartmentalized efforts, and are present throughout this dissertation. Evaluation represents my subjective critique of social justice leadership praxis, with the primary goal of improving educational settings (Eisner, 2002). Themes are like a pervasive quality, and represent the dominant features or reoccurring messages that pervade the art of social justice leadership as practiced by the SSAO (Eisner, 1998). Eisner (1998) asserts that in educational criticism and connoisseurship themes are, "distillations of what has been encountered. In a sense, they provide a summary of the essential features. They also provide clues or cues to the perceptions of other situations like the situation from which the themes were extracted" (p.104). Unlike some other qualitative research, themes are woven throughout the analysis below rather than presented as singular headings. The more organic and contextualized presentation of themes, stemming from the critical postmodern framework underpinning this research, reflects the disbelief in a single truth or objective piece of data. Eisner (2002) asserts that "One must inevitably appraise the value of a set of circumstances" because the end goal of educational criticism is to "improve the educational process" (p.231). I believe my appraisal is woven throughout the narrative above, but it is more directly presented below, and also following the second narrative.

John, relativity new in his tenure as the SSAO at Prairie View College, is well positioned to have a substantial and long-term impact on the college as it aspires toward social justice goals. He is well liked and respected by key campus constituencies, including the top administrators and key staff in his unit. Prairie View is the kind of

college where people remain as employees for many years, and there will always be some resistance from staff when change is initiated. For example, when I asked John about his greatest professional social justice accomplishment, he cited the recent transition he spearheaded of the college campus becoming smoke-free. During the transition, several employees were extremely unhappy with the change, and a few even quit working at the college as a result of the policy change. John learned valuable lessons from his intimate involvement in the campus smoking ban which can help inform future policy changes.

That a smoking ban is John's greatest social justice achievement, an assertion corroborated when I asked a campus director who reports to John, is telling. It's a stretch to include this example as social justice, as defined by Adams, Bell, and Griffin (2007). However it is consistent with John's assertion that equality is a core vale of his leadership. He likely viewed making the campus smoke-free as an issue of equality, and therefore laudable. If John had the training or the background to better advocate for students of color at the policy level, I am confident he would champion a change, even if it were unpopular with some people on campus. What is missing is the operationalization of equity, versus equality, thinking. John understands the different between striving for a neutral technocratic focus on equality, for example by focusing only on numerical diversity; and a commitment to equity which involves a more intentional inventory of campus climate and culture. John's commitment to thinking equitably, rather than being limited to aspirations of equality, permeates my shadowing experience. John thinks more complexly about social justice issues, for example the inequitable impact of the campus

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eviction policy for fighting on Black students, but often struggles to translate this keen awareness into action.

At least two examples of opportunities for substantial social justice activism which John can realistically engage with include a new pool of resources identified by the state college system, and gender-neutral housing. In passing, John mentioned to me that he received an e-mail from the college system office asking SSAOs for proposals for use of a new pool of one-time funds. I was ecstatic to learn that John submitted a proposal for a campus program directed at recruiting, retaining, and graduating Latino/a students. Additionally, John's decision to mention to the campus president that the campus needs a gender-neutral housing option, and the quick yet positive response, demonstrates another opportunity for social justice activism. If either of these initiatives were to come to fruition, they would represent a substantial campus commitment to social justice exceeding the campus smoking ban. John is understated about these two preliminary examples of his social justice leadership, his humility and modesty a reoccurring theme.

More than anything else, John struggles with the tension between what is right, and what is good. This is evidenced in the narrative above, where John reflects on the conflict between his personal beliefs and the consistency of practice he feels required to professionally uphold. When talking about his classroom discussion about the Confederate flag, John reflected that, "I had two John's in that room with me, I had me personally, and me VP, and, we don't agree. The VP has to say this, the personal me would say this." This strain between the person and the professional resulted in John nearly breaking down in tears when discussing the impact that evicting a group of Black

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students had on these people and their families. When John received an appeal letter, laced with allegations of racism on the part of the campus and John specifically, it was clear that these allegations disrupted his leadership equilibrium. However, regardless of how much he is personally impacted emotionally and intellectually, John has been successful in his career being consistent. Consistency equates with integrity for John, and more than anything else, he has integrity. However this rigid adherence to consistency, the consistency of practice advocated for by the system attorney, is not easily reconciled with a paradigm of equity. Thinking and acting equitably may at times result in treating individual students and situations unequally. For example, it became clear that Mario had a troubling home life, and that sending him home to live with his mother would do more harm than good. If the campus policy where to suspend students for engaging in suicidal behavior, the previous policy at Prairie View which John said he wishes was still the case, Mario would be sent home. I am confident John would consistently apply this policy to Mario, for his value of integrity and consistency would trump the one-time individual impact on Mario. If John were to embrace a more socially just leadership style, one embracing the subjectivity of life from a socio political frame, he may better enact social justice leadership.

A reoccurring theme on campus at Prairie View College was one of color-blindness, perhaps evidenced best by the academic services vice president stating that the campus has had only one issue related to race in the past 17 years. John largely challenges this narrative, naming the salience of race many times during my period of observation. I think he is less comfortable with identifying other social identities, such as

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sexuality or religion, but John possesses a critical analysis of race and racism beyond

most of his peers. I was therefore surprised when I asked John about the art displayed in

a large meeting room in the union. The art has a 1970s "Art of the American West" feel,

dominated by oil paintings of rural landscapes, cowboys, and stereotypical and offensive

depictions by white artists such as "On the Warpath" (Figure 10).

Figure 10: On the Warpath

When I ask John about the art, and specifically the images of violent American Indians,

he acknowledges that he has never thought about it critically. He does confirm that the

room is frequently used during admissions visits with potential new students. Prairie

View College is located virtually equidistant between the ten most populous American

Indian Reservations in the United States, seemingly a ripe recruiting opportunity. That

John, the person who oversees the Admissions Office and who is largely responsible for

the student body, had not considered the impact the art may have on some

underrepresented students, demonstrates that color-blindness on campus even permeates his very well intentioned social justice leadership.

Several times during the shadowing experience John mentioned to me that he is open to feedback, that he tries to educate himself, and that he is really open to growth about social justice, all assertions which were validated during my time on campus. John expands his knowledge base by reading, consuming diverse media, and talking with people; all laudable endeavors. For example, many weeks after our time on campus was over, John let me know he was reading a recently published book about social justice. His commitment is sincere. And, it appears John is not sure what to do to learn and grow beyond these largely individual and intellectual, rather than emotional, acts. John is sincerely interested in diversifying the student body and the staff at Prairie View College, yet he does not know how. I fear that unless an intentional and holistic commitment to learning and growing occurs for John, and for the larger campus, John's model of social justice leadership praxis will be incrementalism. Perhaps better than the status quo, incrementalism will not dramatically improve the campus culture at Prairie View to be more inclusive anytime soon. John is likely the single person on campus best positioned to lead a more comprehensive and multifaceted social justice transformation, and I believe he is willing and interested in doing so. The fact that he is not sure how to navigate or chart this path is a failure not of his, nor the campuses, but of higher education as a whole.

Personally, there are few heterosexual Christian white men who I look to as social justice mentors. Most people who share these identities, who I have had the chance to

authentically become familiar with, are entrenched in a privileged bliss about social justice work in society. However I am proud to call John a mentor in this area. When John is given positive and negative feedback, he seems to discard the positive and focus on the negative. This is particularly true about his social justice leadership, however he has few in his life to hold him accountable for his aspirations of inclusivity. Part of this is the product of his location of residence, largely homogenous, but John can continue to invite people into his life to help him learn and grow related to power, privilege, and oppression. Because I know I personally have much to learn from John, I hope he was sincere when he mentioned wanting to develop a personal relationship.

Chapter Five: The "Chief Worrier"

I associate high elevation with mountains. Living on the Front Range in

Colorado, I know if I drive west, up one of the hundreds of canyon roads, I will be

dramatically going up, increasing in elevation. The drive to Land Grant University from

my home is not dramatically up any mountain canyon. Yet, the university is at an

incredibly high elevation. The path of ascension is gradual, unassuming, and typically

lacks drama. The understated drive is much like the university itself. Collegiate, but not

pretentious. Large, but navigable. Aesthetically pleasing, yet largely cold and

uncomfortable.

The first major human-made artifact approaching Land Grant University from the

south, aside from Cement Company with two imposing smokestacks which has been sued

for more than 6,000 violations by a local environmental group for pollution, is the

"Historic Frontier Steakhouse: The Cavalryman." The restored westward

expansion/manifest destiny style red stage coach reminds visitors that this land is solidly

etched into the United States hegemonic narrative of the Western Frontier. The town

hosting Land Grant University rests on land originally occupied by the Northern

Arapahoe prior to colonization. Post colonization, the Northern Arapahoe have been

relegated to a reservation about 200 miles north of campus. Another 175 miles beyond

the reservation rests a now empty and largely forgotten Japanese Internment camp, or as

the United States government called it, "Relocation Center," which once had more than 10,000 mostly Japanese-American prisoners.

The Short March

Lynne McCallihaster asked for my shadowing to occur during the campus week-long recognition of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. (MLK) in January, 2014. We plan to meet at the evening dinner, but I am able to come early for the 2700 foot long march from a town building to campus. I grew up in low-context New York being taught in my first-year college leadership class that early is on time, on time is late, and late is unacceptable; so I arrive at 3:15pm for the 4:00pm rally and march. Upon locating the rally, I am surprised to find no one there. I drive around the easily navigable town, which operates on a perpendicular north-south grid, and find my desired destination, a local coffee shop. Assuming the coffee shop is a hub of campus-community activism and community engagement, I am challenged by my first, of many, false assumptions. The barista, a traditionally college-aged tattooed and pierced white man, has no idea about the presence or location of any MLK march now scheduled to begin in 16 minutes. I thank him for the luke-warm coffee costing me exactly $1.00, and leave wondering if the state has no sales tax, if he just did not charge me tax, or if the price is adjusted for ease of commerce. Putting the other two dollar bills back in my pocket, I have clearly been spending too much time at Start$$'s, I decide to head back to the city building hoping I do not have my directions wrong.

Thankfully, a small crowd has now gathered at the city building, with striking age diversity and homogenous racial representation. The 90% white people at the rally

huddle together with snow on the ground and the sun quickly setting, making it feel

colder than the 22 degrees Fahrenheit my Weather Bug application reports. As the crowd

gathers, the approximately 140 people cluster near the north side steps where the event

speakers will soon address the crowd. I am surprised that approximately 1/5 of the

people are children, most erecting a handmade or university provided protest sign. The

event planners brought dozens of signs with an open box where individuals completed

the sentence, "I march for…." Most people seem to be marching for politically palatable

causes like "equality for all," and "peace," confirming my assumption that in a

conservative mostly white town like this, the MLK events would be "diversity light"

(Gorski, 2013) and contribute to the iconization of MLK (Dyson, 1993). Meta-cognitive

reflections reveal my judgment of the march, the event, the town, and the university: I

think of all the other people not recognized in a march like this, Malcolm X, Yuri

Kochiyama, Dolores Huerta, and Sitting Bull, for example. My righteousness validated,

a white woman welcomes the crowd to the event and briefly reflects on the theme of the

13th annual march, "A Dream Forward." After a brief introduction, a Latina university

Assistant Professor next speaks and quickly reminds me of how counter-productive my

judgments are, for they taint not only my learning but also my observation skills. In an

11 minute brilliantly constructed speech she weaves together themes from generations of

radical racial activism with the wisdom of a seasoned community organizer. Her ability

to talk about and center race, while making intersectional arguments and reminding the

audience of MLK's consistent critique of the manifestation of exploitative U.S.

capitalism reminds me of early sociology classes which rocked my intellectual

foundation. She concludes her provocative remarks with salient connections to regionally relevant contemporary social justice issues, including immigration, unacceptable faculty diversity, and marriage for people who are lesbian, gay, and bisexual. Distracted by my erroneous assumptions related to the "diversity light" character of the march, I almost forget I am here to meet and speak with Lynne. I spot her standing on the sidewalk in the very back of the crowd, engaged in an intimate discussion with someone. I decide not to interrupt, and rather join the crown in our short walk to campus (Figure 11).

Feeling slightly like a voyeur, and now realizing that I may be the only person at this rally and march who has not yet spoken with another individual, I coyly walk close enough where I can swoop in and engage Lynne in conversation when she is alone, yet far enough to avoid detection. I observe Lynne warmly greeting and at times embracing dozens of people at the rally. Now half way into our walk she has had at least six different conversations with six different people, including an older overweight white man with a beard, walking a bike, and holding the most unique homemade sign in the crowd reading, "No to ammo manufacturing in our town." In activist and protest circles in Denver I have found similar eclectic citizens to be passionate and committed, and often ignored by entrenched administrators in positions of authority like Lynne. I observe that Lynne has an incredible ability to make generous eye contact with people while marching down the at times snow and ice covered street, lead by two police officers. This observation, that Lynne has the incredible ability to be present and listen to people, making them feel validated and important, is a valuable skill which is

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confirmed on an ongoing basis during my period of observation. As we close in on the

final third of our march, I decide to stop being preoccupied with talking with Lynne, and

conclude I will catch up with her at the reception. My attention turns to the marchers

(Figure 11).

Figure 11: MLK March

I am immediately preceded by members of a campus sorority, occasionally reciting

rehearsed in-group squeals and chants to and from members. Flanking these seven

sorority members is a group of five people, all wearing sneakers and blue jeans, who look

to be college students, guessing by age. With no consistent chant throughout the crowd,

and a moment of prolonged silence, these students who all appear to be white, fill the

silence with the exuberant shouting of "why can't we be friends……why can't we be

friends!" Having just returned from leading a weekend overnight social justice retreat for

students from another university, and spending substantial time helping participants understand the difference between friendship and allyship, the latter being an ongoing social justice commitment to institutional-level activism, I wonder if these white students' privileged identities are informing the 1970s-era aspiration for multicultural tolerance of diversity.

As I wait outside the door of the student union, I see Lynne approaching from the south with the sun now completely set. Throughout my seven days on campus with Lynne, she introduced me to dozens of people, the university president, staff, and students. However the first person she introduces me to during my experience is the most memorable. Like I am at an awkward middle school dance gawking at one person the entire night who when then approaches me for the first time, I became paralyzed as Lynne introduces me to the older, bike toting, ammunition store protester from the march. Perhaps I spent too much time at "Occupy" protests recently, but men like this are often the most committed and unapologetic activists, and I had a great deal of reverence for this man before I meet him. Lynne could never have known this, so the introduction struck me as ironic and interesting. As I shake his hand, noting his meek handshake and aversion for eye contact, Lynne and I enter the union for the evening's program.

Pioneer-Interrupted

At over six feet tall, I am accustomed to looking slightly down at most people when I stand close. Lynne is a close talker, and I am struck that our eyes are at almost at the same level. Lynne is thin, typically wearing a small heel on her leather boots, bumping up her height a few inches. As we enjoy a phenomenal program, involving

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music, performances, and thankfully for me coffee, Lynne is very attentive to me, helping

me understand in-group references and introducing me to nine people. I feel welcomed,

involved, and grateful for this opportunity.

In my doctoral "Diversity in Organizations" class we spent substantial time

discussing the commonplace "diversity light" programming on college campuses (Gorski,

2006). Events consisting of dancing, food, and music, which Gorski (2006) calls the

"three F's: Food, Festival, and Fetish," dominant the primary narrative about diversity in

higher education. I expect the MLK week festivities on this conservative and

homogenous campus to conform to this pattern. And I am wrong, again. The MLK

program in a dated third-floor ballroom of the student union contains incredibly moving

speeches by the university provost followed by a professor on campus. The components

of the event have a strong activist bend, with a focus on intersecting identities and a call

to action for making the campus community more inclusive. Like the speaker at the

beginning of the march, the program for the evening involves strong social justice

content, examining systems of oppression and the need for equity, and not just equality

aspirations consistent with the "why can't we be friends" group of students. The keynote

speaker encourages us to embrace critical disagreements, as they often lead to positive

outcomes. I get excited about observing as many critical disagreements related to social

justice as possible over the next several days. As it turns out, few such occurrences

materialize.

As the event concludes, the audience engages with a visual and audio recording of

MLK's "I Have a Dream" speech. I am happy to experience a substantial section of the

speech, and not just the truncated and palatable, "will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character" section. I am particularly interested in the perhaps unintentional commentary of the projection screen blocking the middle two-thirds of the expansive mural in the ballroom depicting the "master" narrative of white western expansion, with the video of MLK challenging our nation to be more inclusive and more excellent (Figure 12).

Figure 12: Mural

A Crummy Pool

Lynne, the proud parent of five dogs and two cats, including an 18 year old deaf Doxin she and her husband recently adopted from the local animal shelter, lives in a rural area of the state with her recently retired husband. She grew up in the rural and sparsely populated state in the mountain west region of the United States, and she competed her undergraduate degree at the same university where she now works. Lynne asserts that the beginning of her student affairs career began in 1979 when she worked in the office of admissions as a senior. Upon graduation, Lynne worked in the admissions office at a small college in South Dakota, making $13,500 a year. At this college a very compassionate VPSA mentored her and helped establish her career path. After a few

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years she moved to a small college in the mountains of Colorado where she worked as the

assistant director of admissions, then making $20,000 a year, a substantial salary in 1982.

There she met her current husband, a professor of economics at the same college, and

moved with him to another rural Colorado town, where she worked in city government.

While working in city government Lynne completed a Master's degree in Public

Administration. She then returned to the same college in rural Colorado where she

quickly became the vice president for enrollment management, a position she held for

nine years. In 1999 her dream job opened up at Land Grant University as associate vice

president for enrollment management; a role she was in until 2005. Lynne then found

herself tapped as vice president for student affairs after a new university president

arrived:

> (The old VPSA)…had great ideas, and really a lot that we are doing today, in
>
> terms of service learning, in terms of alternative spring break, a lot of the
>
> coalitions…MLK Days of Dialog, I mean many of the major programs, sustained
>
> today because of (the VPSA's) influence, she had great ideas, but she had a hard
>
> time kind of making it work.

In part because the old VPSA positioned herself as a diversity leader on campus, Lynn

stayed away from this as a primary focus on her leadership. She also self-deprecatingly

offers that she:

> Benefited from a crummy pool, I know I did, and I am the first one, and I do not
>
> mind saying it because I know it was a crummy pool. I did interview with

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another guy who is highly published…and he is brilliant, and I am so embarrassed that I got the job and he didn't.

Four different times during my observation Lynne shares that she "benefited from a crummy pool," or that she got the VPSA job because she was, "just in the right place at the right time." This narrative is interesting given that she was selected for the position over a more accomplished and better known national leader in the student affairs profession. Also notable is that when asked about her career path Lynne highlights her undergraduate degree, human communication, and her master's degree, but did not mention her doctorate. When I ask about her EdD it becomes clear that this degree is not remarkably impactful or salient in her personal or professional growth or development. Lynne is very practitioner oriented, so her desire to pursue an EdD and not a PhD was intentional:

> But I have always been very pragmatic in my approach, and very much a practitioner, and even that is why my dissertation, and even the EdD was a much better approach for me because the level of research really did not warrant a PhD. It was important research, it was valuable research, but it was more what a practitioner would do. So I think, you know, if I would have been younger, I think I would have been interested in having pursued the PhD, and taken it up a few notches, but I knew that this was the job I wanted, that I wanted to be a practitioner. But you know I am dabbling in the classroom with this freshman course, but I am not a faculty member Ryan, I know that. I just, marvel, at what faculty do, the level of research, and, it's just so impressive to me.

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Reverence for faculty is apparent throughout our shadowing experience. Lynne credits

her understanding and belief that faculty, and not student services, is the core function of

the university as part of why she has been successful. Her relatively long tenure as a

VPSA with three different university presidents may be related to this belief in the

academic mission:

> I think higher ed in general you have to understand the academic mission. And I
>
> credit my husband with that. I think I learned more about higher ed and that
>
> relationship, and how you need to respect that relationship, and that is why I
>
> always, the student affairs academic affairs relationship is so critical. And for us,
>
> too many times student affairs professionals have chips on their shoulders that
>
> they think they should be the premier role in the institution, and we are here to
>
> educate. But we are educating in our context, and faculty are doing what they do.

The respect and reverence for her husband and the profound impact he has had

encouraging, supporting, and at times informing her professional career, is frequently

referenced during our time together.

The Creepy Guy on the Wall

Much of the rich conversation which occurs during the shadowing experience

happens as we walk to and from meetings. Lynne is one of the few people I have met

who walks faster than me, and I find myself at times struggling to keep up, reminding me

how others may often feel when struggling to keep up with me. As we are scurrying to

and from meetings, always running a little, but never substantially late, Lynne

demonstrates the masterful skill of being very present with me and our conversation, and

also always scanning the people we pass to ensure she properly greets anyone she knows, which happens approximately every 27 seconds as we walk across campus. Always greeting people using their first names, Lynne makes them feel special and me feel included simultaneously.

This most sincere interest in and care for people exudes from Lynne like the smell of homemade baked goods at a small town bakery at 5:30am on a Saturday morning. Several times Lynne says an iteration of "it is all about the students," when talking about her position and the role of student affairs in higher education. Statements such as, "I think we are all focused on students, their learning, and their success," are commonplace, and Lynne's verbal and nonverbal sincerity and empathy come across as she speaks about students. This is demonstrated by the intentional decision to display an eerie piece of student art, hanging it behind her door (Figure 13: Eerie Man).

Figure 13: Eerie Man

Lynne reports hanging this disturbing piece of art as a reminder that students may have many adverse life experiences and baggage that they carry with them; and all of these

students are deserving of individual and institutional attention and support for academic

and life success. Also, more dramatically, the art is a reminder that students can become

violent at any time. I could not help but feel like the man in this picture, staring across

Lynne's expansive desk out the large windows facing west, is simultaneously

appreciative and impatient about the campus and Lynne's efforts, towards inclusivity for

all students. He appears both judging and approving, representing one of the many

contradictions existing on campus at Land Grant University, and also in Lynne's social

justice leadership praxis.

The Ubiquitousness of Whiteness

Race is a social construction, and in the Unites States, is a concept invented

around the time of European colonization. Race as a social construct became a tool to

categorize and oppress, and at different times in U.S. history, Chinese, American Indians,

Mexicans, Irish, Italians, and Jews have, and have not been, categorized as white

(Bonilla-Silva, 2009). As a tool for categorization, phenotype is often used to roughly

guess one's race visually. The accuracy of this visual categorization is limited and is also

regionally contextualized. A person in a racially diverse place like Los Angeles may be

read differently racially than in Burlington, Vermont, for example. The lived experiences

of people who are largely perceived as people of color are often, usually, or perhaps

always, informed and impacted by this racialized experience. Therefore, I offer some

description and interpretation based on race, both as a function of United States

government sorting through the census, and as informed by my subjective observations

and subsequent guesses as to others' racial identities. Given how simultaneously visible

and invisible race is to Lynne and at Land Grant University, it is an essential component of this research.

The town which hosts Land Grant University, aptly named a college town given the 2010 population of 30,000, counts 90% of its inhabitants as white. Land Grant University, with its student population of approximately 13,000, is slightly less diverse racially, with 91% of students being white. During my time of observation, I participate in 12 meetings with Lynne which contain at least on additional person. In these 12 meetings, a total of 175 people are in attendance. Many of these people, such as the interim associate vice president of undergraduate education and budgets, are in several of the meetings we attend, so there is some overlap. Of the 175 people attending these 12 meetings, 167, or 95% of them, are white as judged by my best visual guess. Of the 12 meetings, two-thirds are attended by no people of color. The most racially diverse meeting I attend is the student affairs directors meeting, with three people of color and seventeen white people. The least diverse meeting of the observation is the meeting with the highest power people at the university, the president's executive council meeting, which involves 18 white people and no people of color.

The president's executive council meeting occurs in the president's conference room. When entering the president's suite on the first floor of a building built in 1887, before the land it rests on was declared a U.S. state, I notice the walls are flanked with dark wood from floor to ceiling, making it feel more like a cave than an office space. High on the walls, just below the ceiling, hang large pictures of the university presidents, all white men looking like members of a historically white fraternity. Of the twenty five

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white men, whose portraits are in classic black and white seemingly elevating their stoicism and associated hegemonic masculinity, four boast facial hair and nine wear glasses. Upon entering the president's suite and advancing to the far north end of space, the old white men on the walls seem to follow visitors with their no longer static eyes, reminding all who enter of the homogenous history of the top administrator at this university for the past one hundred and twenty years. Another office artifact more salient for contemporary meeting participants is the coffee machine greeting all as we enter the conference room. The large office space has two walls of glass, framing large antique trees native to deciduous forests. Delicate low-density snowflakes flirt with the leafless branches like thousands of young male high school football players aspiring to a short career of serial concussions in the National Football League.

The president, a bald white man who made his career in venture capital and private equity, and who very recently had his interim title removed by the board of trustees, sits at the head of the long conference table with the woman provost to his right. These top two leaders at the head of the university organizational chart are flanked on both sides by white men who are senior administrators. The executive council hierarchy clear, other vice presidents fill out the conference table, with associate and assistant VPs, guests, the athletic director, a woman who appears to be the president's assistant, a guest who later presents to the executive council about reporting systems, and myself and Lynne sitting at the perimeter of the room surrounding the conference table. Lynne mentions that she typically sits at the conference table next to her close friend, the VP for

information technology, making me feel guilty for facilitating her sitting with me on the outskirts of the meeting.

These spaces are actually very comfortable for me as I have spent much of my adult life in spaces with powerful white people. I am affirmed in my decision to wear a sports coat and tie this day of observation, rather than my usual khakis and button down shirt, for all the other men in the space have on suits and ties. As a middle-class white man, at times I am invited to participate in an Old Boys' Club. I have been on private golf courses with white men in positions of substantial power and influence, and I can accommodate the expected patterns of behavior and discourse; firm handshake, unwavering eye contact, verbal reverence in the form of "Sir," fabricated humility laced with confidence, self-deprecating humor, and short declarative un-disclaimed statements. These skills serve me well as I am introduced to the president by Lynne.

Lynne, accurately guessing that I am observing the racial homogeneity in the room, offers, unprovoked, "We need ethnic diversity at executive council." This is more apparent to me than the ever-present cowboy iconography ubiquitous on campus and in this town. Recognizing that our whispering may be distracting to others, I decide to save my next question as I note the laudable gender balance in the room. I know many universities of this size have a person who serves as a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO), and my desire to ask Lynne about this position at the university distracts me, so I make a note to ask her later. When I do ask Lynne about a CDO, she shares that, "each college needs to make sure they weave in diversity, do you have a VP of Diversity, or does everybody

own it?" When I probe deeper into her personal opinion on the role of a CDO, or the model of having all aspects of the university "own it," she shares:

I, you know, as you have heard me say a lot, we need chief worriers. But I do not think you have chief worrier over diversity to make a major impact…I am ok with diffusing, because I think it is, we all have to own it. And I, you know, as you have heard me say a lot, we need chief worriers, but I do not think you have chief worrier over diversity to make a major impact. Now (the old president) was planning on hiring a VP of diversity, but he didn't get to that. But, also, I have never been somewhere that had a VP for diversity, so maybe it is the Allegory of the Cave, but I do think we all have a responsibility there. And I don't think we are making the strides we need to in terms of the diversity of our workforce, the diversity of our students, and we have our work cut out for us. And we do not have a systematic approach to get there.

It is clear from my observations that neither Lynne nor the university has a systemic approach to "get there."

Often when talking about race in the United States, a Black-white paradigm appears. This narrative perpetuates the myth that race is only a Black-white issue, or that when talking about students of color at a predominantly white campus, we are only talking about Black students. Perhaps informed in part by the fact that most of my time on campus is during the week-long MLK Days of Dialog programming, I find this paradigm to exist on campus. This is particularly interesting given the larger numbers of Latino/a students on campus and in the community compared with Black people. There

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is a campus statue on campus depicting a famous American Indian Chief with an inscription reading, "I fought to keep our land, our water, and our hunting grounds—today education is the weapon my people will need to protect them" (Figure 14).

Figure 14: American Indian Chief

When I specifically ask about social justice accomplishments of which she is proud, Lynne offers:

> I was part of some efforts with the reservation when we were doing repeated visits
> to the Tribal College to try and integrate what they were doing around, just
> growing the enterprise…And it (the Tribal College) is just having so many
> challenges, they just can't, they seem to set themselves up for things to not make
> progress. It is really kind of sad.

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The language of "them," "integration," and the implication that the people at the Tribal College cannot help themselves, a "sad" reality, reflects a lack of contextualization related to power, privilege, and oppression. The context of a western and dominant narrative of education (de)volves from this narrative. The power imbalance between the Tribal College and the large institutionalized and government supported land grant university is also unrecognized in this short synopsis of a very complex situation. Interestingly, when I call the local Tribal College, they share with me that there are 10 times more students enrolled than what Lynne thought.

Religious Double-Standard?

Another component of campus culture related to social justice infrequently discussed during my time on campus is Christian privilege. Perhaps due to my lack of familiarity with the culture, or my not identifying as Christian, the presence and celebration of Christianity on campus is palpable to me, much like the seemingly ever-present wind, averaging 24 miles per hour (MPH) during the month of January, mild compared to the average daily wind speed of 45MPH in October, which folks from campus have become accustomed to experiencing. One staff member, who astutely observes that Land Grant University is more comfortable talking about diversity than social justice, shares that the campus is relatively comfortable talking about LGBT issues, but not religion. While I observe virtually no discussions about sexuality or gender identity, I concur that Christian privilege is largely uncritiqued. When asked about this, Lynne shares:

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There is definite Christian privilege, but it is, (3 second pause), it kind of goes

back to…just kind of stay out of people's business, people don't make a big deal

about it, but I have gotten away, we don't do Christmas decorations in this office.

And I am kind of bad, I do not even send the Christmas cards, or throw the

holiday parties, everybody calls it holiday, nobody calls it Christmas parties.

The acknowledgement of Christian privilege reflects a general awareness, interesting

though that Christian privilege seems relegated to a conversation about Christmas.

Moreover, the assertion that nobody calls them Christmas parties is contradicted by

another student affairs director on campus who in passing says, "at the Christmas party,

or wait, we are supposed to call it a holiday party," reflecting that perhaps the language,

or the values of inclusiveness behind the language, has not yet been fully adopted.

Lynne makes a passing reference on one of our walks to Muslim students when

she shares, "We have had some issues with Muslim students praying and washing feet,

and wanting a room, but we have found that most like to do it in private." I find myself

skeptical that all Muslim students were polled related to the preference for a designated

room on campus for prayers, common on other college campuses. Later, Lynne delves

further into the nuances of institutional and systemic level privilege when she shares:

So, I get an e-mail from a colleague on campus today that said, do you have any

problem, these Muslim students want to hand out roses as people are walking into

the union on February 6th. It's part of a national endeavor. And I said, of course

that's fine. And I think, well I don't get emails when the LDS (The Church of

Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) students want to have an event.

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Lynne clearly demonstrates an awareness of the privileged narratives on campus, given

her noting the differential treatment Muslim and LDS students receive on campus. What

is not clear is if the awareness translates into action, as Lynne did not address this

discriminatory behavior at the time with this staff member.

Blitz It!

As a profession, student affairs in higher education has decentralized socialization

processes for the professionals contained within its' ranks. Job descriptions with required

educational credentials virtually always require a degree in higher education "or other

related field." This helps diversify the backgrounds and experiences of staff in student

affairs, and means that shared training or educational experiences are uncommon. The

two overarching student affairs professional organizations, NASPA and ACPA, both

espouse a commitment to social justice as a core value. Social justice competencies and

outcomes are discussed within the profession, however the manner of acquisition,

particularly for staff not trained through student affairs master's programs, is often

elusive. This phenomenon is demonstrated by Lynne's lack of formal social justice

training. When I ask about her SJ training, she shares:

> I think (4 second pause) I would say most of my exposure and understanding (2
>
> second pause) has come more from my experiences here, in just going to lectures,
>
> going to be a real participant in every, with student groups. I thrive, I love being
>
> able to meet with multicultural groups, being part of this (campus SJ symposium),
>
> trying to understand the needs of students across the board, no matter what their
>
> issues are, believing in that all students should have the kind of exposure and

support, no matter what their backgrounds are…But, I make an active

commitment to go to anything and everything related to international students,

related to our students of color, related to our LGBT students.

Lynne also mentions enjoying the diversity classes in her EdD program, but struggles to

offer notable SJ training. Attending SJ related programs is a very clear commitment of

Lynne's, one that I observed and her colleagues also noted. However additional policies,

hiring practices, procedures, or an initiative Lynne has coordinated related to SJ proves

challenging to identify. Also notable is that Lynne identifies international students,

students or color, and LGBT students as specific populations she has a particular

commitment to supporting by attending their events. One of her directors offers the

perception in the division that Lynne is particularly focused on international students and

fraternity and sorority students.

Lynne is clearly impacted by a "challenging" relationship, which I infer has not

continued beyond a specific bounded program, with a woman of color whose daughter is

a dean at the university. Part of our rich dialog related to the relationship is offered in

length:

Lynne: Her mother (the dean) taught me a lot about diversity when I did (a state

leadership program), which was a good experience. In going town to town, we

did nine months of meetings with 40 other people, but what was more important

was traveling with (the dean's) mother who is (4 second pause), oh she challenged

me the entire time about how I sat back and I am a woman of white privilege.

And so it was absolutely exhausting every trip, but I learned so much, and we

would come to the weekend of these experiences where you are getting to know

people in the community…but she would talk about how, from a diverse

perspective, it was alienating to her, and so we do these debriefings, and I really

value my relationship with (the dean's) mother. She is a really great psychologist

in town.

Ryan: So did her challenging of you related to white privilege have an impact on

how you do your job?

Lynne: Oh I think so. I think much differently about things I am involved with

now. And I catch myself when I get into certain stances where I am obviously

entering some bias that I have.

Ryan: That is a lot of it, when we catch ourselves…

Lynne: And even in language, you know how usually, I try to really be respectful

in my language, but you also have to be inclusive with language. I caught myself

a couple of times with you, when you go down the gender route, and then you go,

oh, but I could have been more inclusive with how I expressed that.

Perhaps I should have, but I did not push for further examples of specifically how being

challenged on white privilege impacts the way Lynne does her job or the tension she

presents between being respectful and inclusive. It is interesting also that when I ask

about white privilege, Lynne offers an example related to gender.

One important area for social justice activism at the individual and institutional

level is hiring. Hiring is an investment in human resources, and can at times be a

decision which results in someone having an impact on a campus for decades. A very

common narrative at Land Grant University that I hear from many administrators and faculty (all white), is that the campus cannot attract people of color to the rural community. The white student body, the cold weather, the wind, the long winter, and the distance from a large urban area are all cited as reasons for their trouble in attracting racially diverse applicants. When I ask if the university Human Resources office or the Equal Opportunity Offices provide hiring goals or targets for search committees, Lynne responded:

> No. We are just proactive in terms of where we advertise. We have blitzed this add for the dean of students…it will be interesting to see if we get much diversity with the pool because we really tried to blitz it.

The reliance upon advertising in places like Diverse Issues in Higher Education and The Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education appear to be the beginning, and the end, of recruiting strategies aimed at creating a robust and diverse candidate pool. These publications have in some ways tokenized diversity outreach efforts in higher education, as any view of the most recent issue of each magazine will reveal dozens of pages of job postings and seemingly less editorial content. When I ask about diversifying the staff through searches, another staff member, the chair of the current open position of dean of students, shares that they will also be sure to include a "diversity question" in their interview protocol.

The (dis)Comfort Zone

While shadowing Lynne for six days, the narrative in my head about her is never anything other than as an incredibly strong and independent leader. I have spent little

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time in my life with people in truly rural areas, so perhaps Lynne is not as notable when compared to other women in the region, however images of Rosie the Riveter frequently enter my mind. Therefore I am almost as startled as she when in a board meeting we attend, a much older, overweight, white man says, after Lynne is introduced to the 29 people in the meeting, that he had her in class many years ago and that she was an excellent student. Lynne graciously accepts the compliment and jovially offers that perhaps she was a "B" student. The man responds with a comment which inflicts significant harm to which he is probably oblivious, saying that he had to give her good grades because her father was his boss. The piercing comment reflects the kind of sexism stemming from entitlement and privilege which is often more harmful than overt sexism, for it operates much like the largely invisible pine beetle who as an individual is almost impossible to notice, but when taken as a part of a larger collective, can have a crippling impact on a pine forest.

Lynne McCallihaster, Vice President and one of the highest ranking administrators at the largest university in the state, experiences the kind of piercing microaggression which coalesces with other slights to create a hostile environment, undermining her power and authority in front of dozens of important campus constituents. Importantly, Lynne does not like to view herself as someone in a position of power, "Well, power, is such a daunting, I don't like to think of what we do as having power." Yet, she does have power. And this man, her old instructor, undermines that power when recalling her father as having, even in jest, a role in Lynne's success. Later, when we are in her immaculately clean, tall and dark SUV heading back to campus from

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the board meeting, Lynne shares how embarrassed she is by the man's comment. Lynne is so thrown, though it was not at all apparent to those in the room, she did not even hear the university president's response to the man's comment of, "If that is not a true story about our state, I don't know what is!"

Lynne is in her professional element when she is in meetings. She enters, facilitates, and engages in meetings with the ease of a seasoned professional and the skill of an Olympic-experienced archer. She praises in public, and critiques in private. The two times she exhibits direct challenge in meetings, she follows up individually to ensure no harm is done to the relationship with the people she challenges. More than any other time, Lynne demonstrates her meeting prowess when leading a discussion about strategic planning with her directors in the student affairs division. Small groups are asked to come up with three top department or unit priorities for their areas. One white man takes the opportunity to offer unsolicited feedback on the division organizational chart earlier distributed earlier in the meeting. Ignoring the directions to report back on area strategic priorities, this man offers some ideas for changing division reporting lines. Aware that this feedback, directly relating to people in this meeting, and the larger politics of organizational charts in terms of power and access, Lynne simultaneously sincerely thanks this person for his creative thinking and offers to the group that, "I am sure many other people have some different ideas on that." The brilliantly crafted comment causes no one to feel defensive, and at the same time validates the people in the room whose reporting lines are being critiqued.

When Lynne is not running meetings, she is similarly proficient in her intentional engagement while a meeting participant. Several times when she is given positive feedback for a division effort, she defers to her staff and says they deserve the credit. Her meeting additions are often qualified, such as, "May I throw out a thought," or, "Jump in if you think I am off." These communication patterns, typically ascribed to women, are usually associated with a lack of assertiveness, or a lack of confidence. Neither of these is true for Lynne, for she employs qualifying speech patterns and humility as part of a strategy to not blunt but strengthen her contributions, thereby predicting adoption in meetings. Interestingly, Lynne feels she is recently more dominant in meetings than usual, despite my observations to the contrary:

> I have been a little bit more dominant, and it does not feel very good. Over the last six months, in fact, there is an intensity about me right now that you would not have seen a year ago because we are under so much more pressure for recruitment and retention this Fall than we have been. So I have been much more directive…and I kind of feel right now like I have to be, because we have to have results.

Perhaps she is different from a year ago, or perhaps Lynne's self-awareness is different. Regardless, the balance she strikes, between being supportive and challenging, is working.

This is not to assert a lack of dissonance. I find myself often wondering if Lynne overcompensates to ensure others see her as a strong and independent person on campus, perhaps in ways no longer intentional or even visible to herself. For example, after a

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directors meeting where her young, petite female assistant brings six moderately heavy flip-chart easels, Lynne insists on carrying them back to the office herself. When her staff member objects, Lynne uses her positional authority to veto the objection. When I attempt to carry all six of the easels back myself, Lynne again protests, and we end up both carrying back three. This independent behavior persists, for when we are leaving a lunch panel I offer to throw out her sandwich plate. I have only my backpack on, and two free hands, while Lynne is carrying two black bags. Lynne would not allow me to throw out her plate after two quick offers. When she is subsequently asked by a young woman staff member to dispose of the plate Lynne is struggling to hold, she again declines the gesture of support. This behavior is replicated throughout the week, like when we have lunch together and I again have two hands free. She again is carrying bags but does not accommodate my offer to carry her sandwich.

A Glass Ceiling

In part due to the lack of racial diversity among her colleagues and the lack of critical discussion about other social identities such as sexuality or religion, I spend substantial time reflecting on the gender dynamics at play on campus. At one early point during our shadowing experience, Lynne asserts that there are, "not really gender dynamics here." A day later, she offers that, "there is kind of a glass ceiling here." When I ask about this disconnect, Lynne offers, "Well, and I probably, I have shared with you my thoughts on gender, and I try not to weave gender into my role in meetings and that kind of thing, but I know that when (a female colleague) and I are at the table it is a lot different conversation." This area of discussion, gender salience, is not predominantly

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comfortable for Lynne, and it seems she wants to move on. Hoping to spend more time

unpacking, I ask again about the glass ceiling. Lynne shares:

> I would say, and so much can come under social justice, (5 second pause), so, ok,
>
> pay issues. I worked really closely with an economist…and an associate provost
>
> and we did a comprehensive study related to gender and salary. And we hired an
>
> external economist to help from Montana, and that was I think a really important
>
> move forward.

When I ask about the move forward, Lynne shares, "We certainly have inequities across

the board with salaries here at the institution, and administrative salaries." The

institutionalization of gender inequality offers an interesting site for further discussion.

Earlier in a conversation with another staff member, I heard reference to a group of

women administrators who meet privately on campus, framed as a group who talk about

gender issues on campus. Lynne is shocked when I ask her about the group:

> I am amazed you picked up on that, it must have come from (a female colleague).
>
> Well, about ten years ago (a colleague) was this female educator…and was the
>
> first woman on the board of trustees, so we started a group that met from time to
>
> time…to have coffee and conversation. And it was kind of a mentoring, but it did
>
> not last very long. (Laughter). You hear everything!

Characterizing the woman-only group as mentoring seems like code for larger issues of

sexism or patriarchy, yet these dynamics leave me with conjecture hovering unidentified

like smog in Beijing. The masks people wear in the world's most air polluted city are

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like the existence of the women's-only meeting or the reference to a glass ceiling, acknowledged but largely un-critiqued as part of the campus milieu.

Though the American Psychological Association, which provides writing guidelines for many of the social sciences, directed the removal of "generic man" language from written works in 1986, the legacy of sexism in language persists throughout U.S. society, and flourishes at Land Grant University. The presence of this narrative, of men being referred to as the generic person, is demonstrated by the John Locke quote etched into the campus recreation center, "Man is of soul and body formed for deeds of high resolve John Locke" (Figure 15).
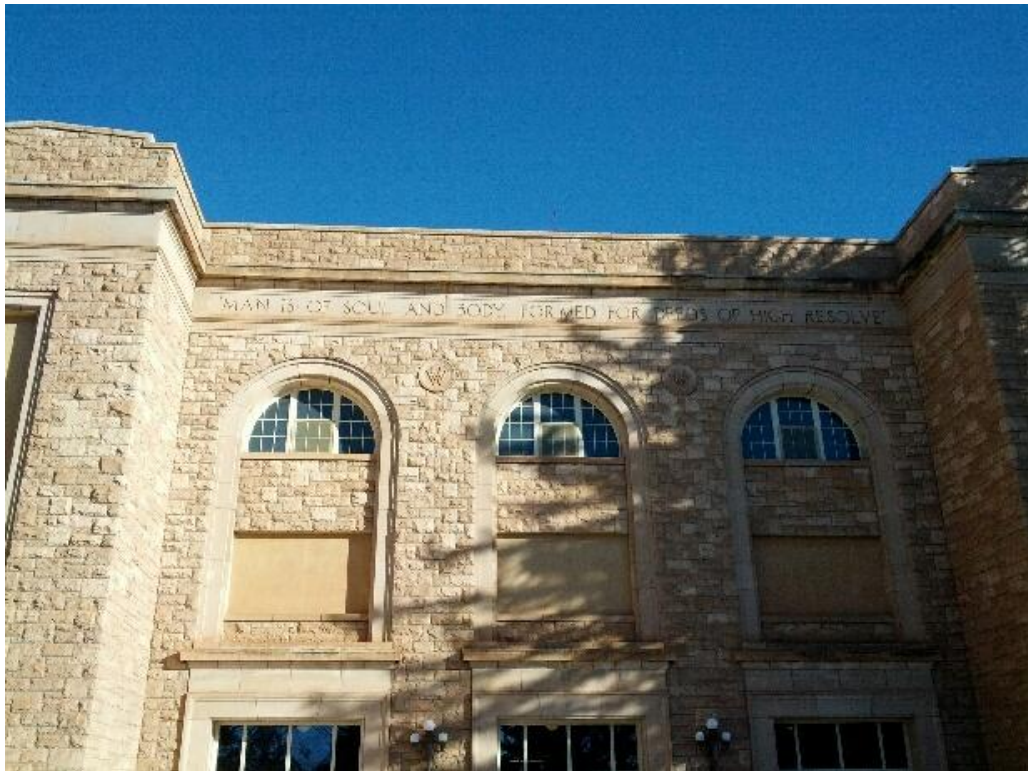

Figure 15: John Locke

This gender exclusive language is commonplace in meetings, though almost always as practiced by men. This is perhaps best demonstrated by the university president three

times in sixty minutes saying all of the following: "Spartan mothers feed their sons," "These guys do a phenomenal job" (referring to a mixed gender group), and citing Mark Twain about, "honest men." This use of the generic man for reference is not identified or named as an example of sexism during my entire time of observation.

A gender-related narrative clearly salient and impactful for Lynne is the use of the term "nice" as a descriptor. We explore this in the exchange below:

Lynne: So that is where it is kind of interesting, how do you use your voice to be effective? It is easy to be nice to people, it is easy to embrace other people's voices, but to also get results, how do you do that and also keep that kind of compassion? Kiss of death for me is that people think I am nice.

Ryan: How is that a kiss of death?

Lynne: Nice, nice, I hate nice. Ever since, my whole life, oh, she is nice. You do not want to be nice, because nice means that, it is so superficial, and it's so, so that's been, really something I have struggled with because I do not want to be perceived that way. My husband does not see me that way, and he sees me as feisty, but, but, but I think it's, you know, you want to be known as results oriented, or effective. But to be, I was worried, because people would, (A male colleague) would say, oh yeah, Lynne, she is really nice. Well (A previous university president) wanted us all to hate what we have done in the past and work on anything that is different than under the (new president) regime, so I thought, oh my God, I can't have that guy hear that I am nice, it is really going to

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be terrible. It is really, it haunts me, it really does, I do not mean to be overly

dramatic.

Ryan: No, I think it is part of the Catch-22 women leaders are in, a double-bind.

Lynne: I overact to the word nice now. Even if somebody says, oh that is nice, I

go (retracts nonverbally with her face and draws he body back, a recoil), because

it just feels like it is so superficial to me.

The gender subtext to some of these data, the reflection on "nice," the "glass ceiling"

narrative, the inequitable pay on campus, all expose larger systemic gender issues on

campus.

Making Coffee or Sausage?

As mentioned in the methods section of this dissertation, my view on this data

collection process, or perhaps more aptly data formation process, is not succinctly

captured with the traditional research notions of observer, participant-observer, or

shadowing experience. I am not a peer, and do not contribute verbally to meetings as

much as others. However I am not mute and I do insert myself verbally when I, or

Lynne, deem it appropriate. It becomes clear to me that my presence and identity of

"doctoral student from the University of Denver interested in social justice and

leadership," quickly spreads across the student affairs division and even campus. At least

two different directors at the university report being more aware of themselves and what

they said related to SJ due to my presence. Because I am aware that my presence has an

impact, and perhaps distracts Lynne and others from their everyday work, I try hard to be

a productive contributing member of the team.

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For example, Lynne's administrative assistant, Deb, who warmly coordinates my visit schedule, indicates one day that she is not coming into the office tomorrow because she needs to finish baking cakes for the 100+ people attending a fundraiser that weekend. She will make three of six cakes tonight, cakes which she personally does not eat due to her disciplined and effective weight management plan, and prepare them for the weekend. Deb indicates that she will prepare the coffee for the next morning, and when I arrive in the office around 8am, I just need to turn on the semi-industrial coffee machine with three separate warmers and a plastic coffee filter holder in desperate need of a deep clean. When I arrive in the morning, Lynne is already in her office, yet the coffee making process, essential to my personal functioning resulting from my caffeine addiction, has not yet begun. I inch close to the main office door of full length glass to size up the coffee machine like Bobby Fisher approaching a chess board. I am thrilled to be thrust into the role of colleague and not parasite, extracting data for my personal gain, so I take the coffee-making role as my most important task of the day. Deb's sloppy handwritten note on a mini post-it, "coffee made," tickles my eye as I size up my options for turning on the machine. Three back-lit red switches stare at me, none of them clearly marked as the elusive master lever. I panic. Lynne is in her office, but must know by now that the office is too quiet, for she does not hear me typing or shuffling papers. I sweat. I flip the first switch, with no response. I then flip the second, and start to feel perspiration on my fingertips as I stroke the third unmoved switch. Nothing. I start feeling up the coffee machine, my sweaty palms stroking the sides, the back, and the front of the machine in search of an on/off switch. It is now 8:26am, and I am slated to

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join Lynne for a meeting at 8:30am. I am distraught, I have only had one cup of coffee this morning, at 5:30am as I began my commute to campus, and this may be my last chance until lunch.

The one task Deb graciously asks me to help with, I am failing at. The PhD student from the fancy expensive private school in Denver, with 10 years of formal college education, cannot turn on the damn coffee machine. My practical utility as a citizen with productive common sense is slipping from my grasp as I reexamine the machine in the same spots, over, and over, and over again as if my earlier physical exam was not comprehensive enough. I struggle to unearth my large-screen cell phone from my tight front pocket on my Khaki pants. It is 8:30am and Lynne will come out of her office any second now. I begin to shuffle the moveable parts on the coffee pot, as if some secret combination of picking up and replacing the pot and coffee filter holder will jump start the ignition like a carjacker hotwiring a vehicle. Lynne appears from her office and takes pity on me, visibly struggling, as I meekly offer the already apparent reality, "Sorry Lynne, I cannot figure out how to turn on the coffee machine." The soon to be Dr. spent twelve excruciating minutes trying to solve a seemingly more complex problem than differential equations, to no avail. No action or words can validate my struggle, as it is truly elementary. Lynne walks over and flips the first of the three large red buttons on the front of the machine. "I tried that," I think to myself, as I realize my impatience facilitated my expedited dismissal of this most obvious coffee machine trigger, for after only three seconds I had unengaged this switch and moved on to another solution. I

flounder in my inability to be productive; defeated, like an infant on her back rocking

back and forth trying to unsuccessfully roll over for the first time.

At the end of our final interview, Lynne gives me an opportunity to contribute in a

more structured manner when she frankly flips the researcher-participant script and asks

me for some direct feedback. She first compliments my observation skills, "You tune

into everything, you win the listener of the year award. It amazes me, you remember

everything." After this acknowledgment, Lynne directly asks for suggestions for

improvement:

> **Lynne**: Ok, give me, where can I improve? You will not hurt my feelings, I need
>
> feedback.
>
> **Ryan**: I mean, I think, I will write up some of that, my thoughts are not fully
>
> formed. But related to the social justice piece, I do think that you have immense
>
> opportunity to impact policies and programs perhaps more directly. I think that
>
> there are some opportunities in the division for you, I think going to the events,
>
> (A colleague) mentioned how visible you are at events and how much it means to
>
> students, they feel like they have a strong ally in terms of visibility and presence,
>
> and I think there are additional ways you can help make that salient in your
>
> leadership here, related to resource and programs, and the hiring thing. I think the
>
> hiring thing, I did a training on hiring from Luoluo Hong, and she would talk
>
> about how we are really good on search committees in terms of selecting, but we
>
> are not good at the searching part, I think that especially for the position like dean

of students which is so important, not just to post in Diverse Issues in Higher Education, but how do we actively recruit with our networks.

Lynne: To get more personal with it.

Ryan: Yes, and to charge your committees as well. Charging folks to do more. The really intentional recruiting, searching to say look, there is a value and commitment here, this is a great place to work.

Lynne: Well, and I really value what you said about being much more intentional with the searches. Back to the social justice with proactively, you know one thing, and I know, that I intentionally kind of back off. (The previous VPSA) could have been described as, she could have been described as that was her main piece, commitment to social justice and moving forward, very proactive, and it became a challenge for her on this campus. And I think led to some of the major conflicts related to her leadership. And that as well as not really being pushy about the need for resources. Now, under (the new university president) I became pretty darn pushy because he empowered that, but I think I have not been as committed to resource development, and, always, oh we will get our opportunity, we will take our time, we will give up our budget reduction first, you know. I see it, it comes out, I go, why am I doing that? And my colleagues sitting around the table would not do that, why am I doing that? Is it to be a nice person? Uggh. What am I doing? And you see it. But on the flip side, related to social justice, I think there are, probably what I have tried to be most, and you are exactly right, is to be present, and to be supportive, and to develop friendships, and personal

relationships. But to get more into the policy arena is probably where I really

need to push.

Ryan: Absolutely. Like I was struck at directors meeting, when we were talking

about strategic planning. It was notable that folks did not mention diversity, or

social justice, or students of color…There probably is a opportunity to do that

more. I think you are right, focusing on access, and retention, and success is a

social justice issue, particularly given how many first-generation college students

you have.

Lynne: That is good feedback…I really do value, Ryan, God, your presence last

week was so valuable to just have you part of discussions.

I am not always sure of what kind of impact, if any, my presence has during my time at

Land Grant University. It is clear to me that the staff I observe, largely homogenous on

the basis of most social identities, are committed to helping students succeed. Stemming

from Lynne, there is not a culture of apathy or dejectedness, even as internal and mostly

external forces, such as the state legislature, are frustrating due to their lack of

appreciation for the hard work occurring on campus.

Lynne is one of the warmest and most sincere people I have had the privilege of

knowing. She truly cares about others, students, staff, and faculty, and is a phenomenal

builder of relationships. Over the past few years it appears that Lynne had been largely

focused on dutifully working to have excellence in her job performance, motivated by

increasing job security. Being a top level, at-will, employee during three different

university presidents was at times stressful for Lynne. But with presidential leadership

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seemingly stable, and Lynne's strong reputation on campus as a competent and hard worker, she has the opportunity to push a social justice agenda if she desires. She has built strong relationships with all of the key campus leaders, generating social currency which can now, if she desires, be parlayed into making substantial change for social justice on campus.

So Lynne McCallihaster is, at this moment, at a professional crossroads, and the strategic decisions she makes over the next few years will cement her legacy at Land Grant University. Her reputation is strong, she is well respected and able to get along with virtually anyone. This is a unique position which brings with it incredible opportunity to have a profound impact through hiring, policy, and budgeting, for students often at the margins of society at Land Grant University, the local town, the state, and the country. I think she will embrace the challenge.

Opportunity Knocks

As with the pervious chapter, this section represents a more intentional focus on evaluation and thematics, though these concepts are similarly woven throughout the narrative above. Lynne is a brilliant leader, with honest interpersonal skills and the unique ability to make those around her feel empowered and supported.   When individually with people, she is remarkably present, making people feel valued. Lynne brilliantly strikes the balance between being involved and familiar with the work of those employees she oversees in her division, without being a micromanager. Lynne is visible on campus to faculty, staff, students, families, and community members, and understands what I heard several times at Land Grant University, that "it is all about relationships."

Lynne has nurtured strong relationships, and as she enters the final ten or less years of her professional SSAO life, for she does desire to retire in the next decade, she is exceptionally positioned to have a lasting impact for social justice at Land Grant University.

Because Lynne is from the state hosting Land Grant University, she completed her undergraduate degree there, and has now worked there for almost fifteen years, her perception of the campus culture, from her positionality, is entrenched and refined. She asserts that Land Grant University is, "an equalitarian place to work, you cannot have much ego here," and she demonstrates this by leading with humility. For example, several times Lynne offers a reflection similar to, "I like to surround myself with people who have skill sets beyond my own." While Lynne wants to surround herself with people who have skill sets beyond hers, she at times falls into a common trap of projecting her understanding of culture and personal experiences and inclinations onto others who may not share the socializing experience or values. So while Lynne is surrounded by staff who have different skill sets, these same people are very similar to her in terms of life experiences and the values privileged on campus.

For example, when talking about motivating staff, she offers, "I don't think morale is a function of your pay or your immediate work function, but if you are learning and growing and developing, this is at least 70% of having a motivated workforce." This intrinsic work motivation is consistent with the narrative of hard work, humility, and simple living privileged on campus and in the community. However, the guess that 70% of employee motivation is related to learning rather than financial compensation or work

function offers an insight into how a leader may privilege their own narrative at the expense of outsiders. And at Land Grant University, outsiders include racially minoritized people, Queer people, people with disabilities, and broadly people from outside of the local community. When this privileging of an insider narrative is coupled with the struggle to specifically recruit people of color from outside the state to apply to Land Grant University, opportunities for growth become apparent. Lynne's desire to have a more diverse student affairs staff is sincere. However looking internally at how her leadership and the culture of the campus project values which may adversely impact diverse candidates coming to campus may be a productive endeavor. For example the local and regional culture of relationships being of elevated importance, and the western, stoic, individualism performed by most from the area, may be off-putting to some of the people Lynn desires to hire. These entrenched cultural values are unlikely to change, but an acknowledgment of their existence and a proactive disclosure to potential employees may demonstrate a proactive awareness of inclusivity and exclusivity in the campus community.

Lynne is very aware of her own skill set and her limitations. Without any formal training in student development theory, she has come to know much of the mainstream higher education literature related to retention. I observed her citing hegemonic beliefs stemming from higher education research, including the view that the first six weeks of a college career predict retention and graduation (Noel, 1975), that multiple connection points with faculty and staff are essential for retention (Astin, 1984), and that campus integration is key to retention (Tinto, 1975). Each of these theories or concepts

privileged in the higher education narrative, all developed by white men, have been critiqued for methodology which relies on homogenous participants and for failing to include an analysis of social identities and the associated privilege. Therefore, while the use of these key theories is well intentioned, it may have the unintentional impact of centering a privileged narrative of what a college student needs to succeed. Were Lynne surrounded by more higher education social justice practitioners, perhaps a diversity of viewpoints would help inform better practices and policies on campus.

This lack of critical social justice capacity possessed by Lynne, and also on campus, is further demonstrated by a conversation about scholarships. Given the high percentage of first-generation college students at Land Grant University, this student status is accurately cited as a part of social justice activism by Lynne:

Access I would put under social justice work, fervently. I mean really my whole career here, and why I came back, was to really help access in (the state), and I think everything I do I want it focused on access, more people going to college, all of the aid programs to sustain and graduate students.

Access to higher education is undoubtedly a social justice issue, and in a state and town that is 91% white, a focus on access becomes a focus on color-blind access because nine out of ten potential new students from the state are white.

Lynne perpetuates the "diversity beyond race" narrative (Bonilla-Silva, 2009) when she shares, "I know that in (the state) we like to think there is diversity in other ways. You know, geographic, and just, basically embracing the human spirit, and seeking out the individual differences, embracing that." Broadening diversity to include

a myriad of different manners of human spirit is important. And this thinking can inform

color-blind policy decisions which can reify institutionalized racial discrimination. For

example, in a meeting with admissions and financial aid staff, six white people, the group

discussed strategies for growing the student body. One strategy identified was the

aggressive outreach of children of alumni of Land Grant University. I asked about the

scholarship opportunities for children of alumni, called legacies, and was told that

legacies receive an automatic $8100 tuition discount. Knowing the history of Land Grant

University, its current and previous demographics, it is accurate to assume almost all

legacies are white. So a focus on expanding campus enrollment though legacies, though

presented as a color-blind admissions strategy, functionally represents a privilege

reserved for white people.

While Lynne is incredibly self-actualized as a leader, the result of an incredibly

successful career which led her to her current role as the SSAO of a major public

university, there are still disconnects in personal perception and the perception of others.

This disconnect was a theme throughout my observation. For example, Lynne was asked

to present to a doctoral leadership class during my time on campus. She began the

presentation telling the students that she wanted to have a conversation and not lecture.

However, she ended up speaking uninterrupted without structured opportunities for

conversation for 50 minutes of the hour long class. This is not a malicious disconnect,

and the verbal statement of intention to have a dialog is inspiring and aspirational.

However, the pattern can become problematic if it impacts social justice leadership

practices and policies. In the narrative above Lynne shares her experience making an

active commitment to attend any campus programs related to international students, students of color, or LGBT students. When I asked two of the directors on campus about Lynne's social justice leadership, they both share the perception that Lynne is particularly invested in the campus experiences of international students and fraternity and sorority students. Perhaps Lynne checking her perceptions with her staff and students may reveal other disconnects in self-perception and the perceptions of those around her.

Lynne is uniquely able to be completely comfortable in one-on-one settings with an 18 year old undergraduate student and with the university president. I think much of this stems from her lack of pretentiousness. She does not pretend to be someone she is not, and she is quick to offer examples of her areas for growth, including social justice leadership. Lynne's student-centeredness, and her understanding of the primacy of the academic mission of a higher education institution have helped her politically savvy career evolution. I am confident that Lynne can achieve whatever level of leadership she desires. President. State Senator. Mayor. Her ability to be simultaneously politically savvy and authentic in unparalleled by any other higher education leader I have met, and I have grown as a scholar and practitioner by spending such intimate time learning from and with Lynne McCallihaster.

Chapter Six: Conclusions

There is no true conclusion or finality when engaging in qualitative research framed by critical postmodernism. No single objective truth exists; therefore a definitive conclusion is elusive and undesirable. Nonetheless, some concluding reflections, ideas, and questions help broaden the impact of this research for the field of higher education, with implications for realizing social justice goals. These reflections represent the malleability of meaning and demonstrate the complexities unearthed conducting qualitative research. As I explore meaning and implications it is essential to remember, "Meaning does not come to us in neat and separate packets" (Uhrmacher, 2002, p. 68). Therefore these reflections represent a complex cognitive, ontological, and cultural meaning-making process stemming from mutually constructed learning encounters with each participant in this study (Uhrmacher, 2002). Subjective and contextualized reflections are presented with the intention of deepening thinking and learning related to social justice in higher education and society writ large. By design, educational criticisms do contain predictable findings due to the necessity for field work and the centering of a subjective experience. These research findings or narratives cannot be replicated given the unique interactions under study at a specific period of time. This is the purpose of this dissertation, to offer matchless insights into a period of time in which

two different SSAOs engage and struggle with social justice leadership to help illuminate this struggle and both celebrate and critique those leadership practices.

The research question guiding this study is: *How do SSAOs enact, through leadership, social justice praxis?* This broad question is addressed throughout the narratives, and no simple or succinct answer exists. The aim of this study is to illuminate the nuances of social justice leadership from the highest position of influence in a division of student affairs on two U.S. college campuses. The construction of the study, framed by critical postmodernism, and the findings are all deeply reflective of my subjective connoisseurship of social justice leadership praxis. As demonstrated in the narratives, social justice praxis is fluid, marked by challenges, opportunities, struggles, and successes. The artistry of leadership demonstrated by John and Lynne is presented through detailed descriptions, interpretations, evaluations, and the presentation of research themes. The aim of this educational criticism is not to offer a prescriptive blueprint for effective social justice leadership praxis. Leadership as an art is subjective and therefore unable to be completely replicated; so a roadmap does not exist. However, deeply delving into the art of social justice leadership performed by these two SSAOs, grounded and framed by critical postmodernism, can help the field of higher education in student affairs see more through the intimate window into practice offered here.

Concluding reflections and thoughts represent the manifestation of co-constructed knowledge. The assertions and implications in this dissertation are presented singularly by me yet they reflect the amount and quality of access granted by each SSAO. The reflections in this final chapter are the result of shared meaning-making about events and

practices under scrutiny, framed by critical postmodernism. Concluding thoughts and reflections are inherently linked to, and reflective of, the relationships built with each SSAO.

Because these relationships evolved toward collegial, and because trust was built between the parties involved, I was nervous to share this dissertation with each SSAO fearing that my subjective experiences with the data may be received in an unexpected or undesired manner. My observations and subsequent appraisals reflect the authentic and transparent relationships forged, and when I shared my work I had some trepidation that defensiveness may arise. I was surprised to receive universally positive feedback from each SSAO. Each indicated that they understood some of our shared experiences differently, and that with additional information I may have seen a situation in an altered manner, but that the narratives constructed are authentic and productive. To offer additional insight into the ongoing relationships between researcher and participant, and reactions to this work, initial written reactions to this dissertation from both John and Lynne are presented in Appendix G. These responses offer windows into each SSAO, specifically their longing for feedback and their desire to be the best social justice leaders possible. The validating nature of the e-mail responses helps achieve the structural corroboration which educational critics seek (Eisner, 1998).

Window into Praxis

Inequity exists and is perpetuated through the social institution of higher education. That inequity is often extended and maintained by mainstream research in education (Pasque, Carducci, Kuntz, & Gildersleeve, 2012). More poignantly, most

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published research in higher education contains predictable findings failing to realize equitable educational goals (Pasque et al., 2012). Critical qualitative researchers, using decolonizing methodologies such as educational criticism and connoisseurship, offer a vehicle of resistance to repressive research norms (Pasque et al., 2012).

Complacency and a continued perpetuation of the educational status quo will not function to change oppressive educational systems, narratives, and policies, which is the primary intention of this dissertation research. "Educational leaders cannot afford to be complacent in this climate of educational inequity and let dominant arguments about higher education prevail" (Pasque et al., 2012, p. 7). Intention is not enough, as well-intentioned people who think they are working for SJ may be having a null or even an adverse impact. Iverson (2012) notes the limits of evaluating intention without focusing on true impact, "Well-intentioned policies committed to creating a more inclusive campus climate may unwittingly reinforce practices that support exclusion and inequity" (p. 152). The disconnect between intention and impact is essential to unpack because, "Higher education as a whole…may well be performing contradictory functions—for example, bolstering and reproducing privilege and inequality at the same time as they are creating new knowledge of benefit to all" (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008, p. 291). These contradictory functions and the associated paradoxes and conundrums facing contemporary SSAOs have been explored in this dissertation, helping fill a gap in the higher education literature related to leadership and social justice.

Both John and Lynne are competent and hard working SSAOs who lead with integrity, and they share a commitment to social justice leadership. Were John and

Lynne to devote substantial time and energy to realizing social justice aspirations, primarily at the individual level, they could lead campus movements toward more equitable learning environments inclusive of all people. Assuredly, obstacles related to funding, curricular hegemony, pedagogical conservatism, and centuries of oppression are barriers to realizing a utopian view of inclusivity. However if any one person on a United States college campus can initiate this change, is the likely the leader with oversight over the expansive division of student affairs. For within a typical SSAO portfolio are essential college functional areas including admissions, residential life, community standards/judicial affairs, and financial aid. These SSAO leaders are guided both by professional organizations and their commitments to social justice (notably ACPA and NASPA), and in the case of John and Lynne, an intrinsic belief in their opportunity and responsibility to work for social justice.

Applying Astin's (1970a, 1970b) classic Input, Environment, Outcome (IEO) model, John and Lynn demonstrate the input component of the social justice leadership equation is in place. These SSAOs have the power and authority to spearhead substantial social justice change, and they both have the desire to engage in the complex work. They can each influence inputs related to resources, fiscal and human. Campus environments, or cultures, may present a hurdle. Specifically, the status quo will continue to move a campus culture in the same direction stemming from decades and centuries of oppressive inertia (Tatum, 2003). Critical postmodernism is a tool to help identify and challenge this ubiquitous inertia (Fay, 1987; Tierney, 1993). A first step in this process of interruption is recognizing that those within the system have benefited from the status of the current

system (Pasque, 2010; Rendón, 2009). This is particularly true for SSAOs who have

ascended a career ladder to the terminal student affairs position in higher education.

Lynne and John have benefited from the status quo, as it has resulted in their successful

career trajectories, so a critique of the hegemonic system is by necessity introspective. It

can be dissonance-inducing to identify and name the ways in which one has benefited

from an oppressive system, yet this is the very social justice work necessary to most

effectively engage in social justice leadership praxis (Chávez & Sanlo, 2013; Pasque,

2010; Rendón, 2009).

Once an oppressive status quo is identified, and when one positions oneself in that

system, directing energies at changing the oppressive status quo becomes a responsibility

stemming from awareness (Fay, 1987; Tierney, 1993). For example, John's strict

adherence to campus policy dictating appropriate conduct for residential students has

resulted in a disproportionate number of Black students being removed from the

residence halls, and subsequently withdrawing from college. John has identified this is

an issue, and he would like to create the conditions to stop this pattern.   Yes he is unsure

of how to progress. Letting this lack of certainty impede action represents the

maintenance of the status quo. Therefore, as is consistent with critical theory, John has a

responsibility to act in a manner aspiring to more equitable outcomes related to students

being removed from residence halls. Perhaps the socialization process needs to be

adjusted, so that at the time of intake students are better orientated about conduct policies.

Simultaneously the actual policy could be interrogated to identify embedded bias. Also,

looking at the adjudication and appeals process, and perhaps building in more

subjectivity related to sanctions, may help realize social justice goals. Finally, John must interrogate his privileged social identities related to race and socio-economic status, exploring how this unearned social privilege impacts his decision making and also the subjective perceptions of the policies and processes by Black students and their families. Regardless, inaction on a policy identified as oppressive and problematic, is in fact a very clear action to continue to maintain an oppressive status quo.

Another issue arising from this dissertation research is the rhetorical commitment to diversity seen in college and university mission statements and the mainstream desire to "diversify" the faculty, staff, and students at Prairie View College and Land Grant University. These declarations are artifacts which can be parlayed into changing environments. For example, Prairie View College in both internal and publically available reports indicates a desire to diversify the faculty and staff. These statements and aspirations can be parlayed into arguing for additional resources to help achieve these stated goals. Perhaps diversity consultants could come to campus to help the college plan for holistically engaging in an intentional and informed strategy to diversity and retain faculty and staff. Or, Vice Presidents like John could participate in professional development to elevate the internal campus capacity for realizing stated diversity goals.

Perhaps the biggest impediment to achieving social justice aspirations, returning to Astin's (1970a, 1970b) the IEO model, is the lack of measurable or identifiable outcomes. Here the influence of neoliberalism and its associated "free market" focus on private sector cost benefit analysis can be seen in the privileging of quantitatively measurable outcomes (Apple, 2001; Darder, 2012). The focus on metric-based outcomes

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is in conflict with a more postmodern view of social change concerned with culture, experience, and environment; concepts cumbersome to quantify with a number. Therefore, while measurable may be undesirable given the associated focus on quantification, identifiable presents a more holistic view of outcomes. A truly socially just campus community would be identifiable to all who participate in that learning community. Few, if any, examples of socially just campus communities exist. But a lack of models should not hinder imagination or effort, for social justice is both a goal and a process (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 2007). Despite, or perhaps because of a lack of models for socially just campus cultures in higher education, the field can greatly benefit from collectively imagining and aspiring toward social justice principles. It is my hope that this dissertation facilitates this imaginative process.

The window into the art of social justice leadership presented in this dissertation helps inform countless questions relevant for higher education scholars and practitioners. Some of these questions may include: What training should SSAOs have to be effective social justice leaders? Can the art of social justice leadership be taught? How do social identities impact and inform SSAO social justice leadership? Are SSAOs accountable for social justice leadership? Accountable to whom? As administrators at the top of a student affairs organizational chart, how can SSAOs empower lower-level staff and students to be actualized social justice change agents? How are privilege, power, and oppression woven into the everyday functions of a college or university? How can this privilege, power, and oppression be effectively identified and deconstructed? Do models or best practices for higher education social justice leadership exist? How do discourse

patterns related to social justice advance and hinder social justice goals? How have

neoliberalism and the associated technocratic solutions to education become the status

quo? What role do SSAOs play in reproducing and interrupting that status quo? Is the

United States manifestation of free market capitalism at odds with social justice praxis in

higher education? Each of these questions evolves from this dissertation research and

provides ample opportunity for important examination and discussion about social justice

leadership in higher education.

Associations

While this research design and presentation of results segments findings by

chapter, a brief reflection on SSAO similarities and differences deepens the learning and

utility of the research. The presented associations, or comparisons, are not intended to

offer objective generalizations, but rather to evolve thinking about effective social justice

leadership praxis which may inform additional productive questions for the field of

higher education in student affairs.

The first overwhelmingly apparent similarity is that both SSAOs sincerely desire

to be more intentional and explicit with their social justice leadership, and both struggle

to operationalize this desire. Few social justice training opportunities exist for SSAOs in

higher education, and both participants are regionally constrained in geographically

isolated areas, limiting in-person peer collegial relationships. Interestingly, neither

SSAO is very involved in national associations or organizations, likely increasing

feelings of isolation and limiting organic opportunities for peer growth, collaboration, or

ongoing professional development. Revisiting the concept of praxis, reflection and

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action aimed at transforming oppressive systems (Freire, 2003, 2005), both John and Lynne demonstrate a deep commitment to the reflection component of social justice praxis. However each struggle to identify strategies or initiatives they see as actionable in the effort to transform oppressive systems.

A related observation reveals that both SSAOs recognize the need to diversify their staff in terms of identities such as race, ethnicity, sexuality, and religion. However, neither SSAO has a specific plan or strategy to do so. Their lack of identifiable strategies for charging searches to solicit a diverse candidate pool demonstrates a contradiction. One perspective each SSAO holds views candidate searches as an extension of color-blind meritoriousness. Simultaneously each SSAO also presents a race-conscious awareness contextualized by historical and contemporary privilege, power, and oppression. Both SSAOs at different times adopt each of these dichotomous paradigms, color-blindness and race-consciousness, hindering progress toward equitable outcomes in search processes.

Another interesting similarity between both John and Lynne, perhaps related to the dearth of professional development opportunities available to SSAOs, is that each leader stated multiple times their appreciation for the opportunity to participate in this research process. This may be due in part to the strong relationships we quickly built, but I think much of the appreciation stems from the loneliness experienced by the top leader of a large division of student affairs. Vice president-level peers on campus direct other functional areas, such as finance or research, so they do not fully understand the work of the student affairs division. Moreover, colleagues in the division of student affairs are by

definition subordinates who all structurally report up to the SSAO. The supervisory

power inherent in these hierarchal relationships adversely impacts mutual vulnerability

and equal critical feedback, enhancing the entrenchment of feelings of isolation. Both

SSAOs mentioned having "friends" in the division who are subordinates, and both

acknowledged that at times the organizational structure caused these friendships to feel

strained. Therefore having a student unaffiliated with the college or university on

campus for a fixed period of time presented a welcome and non-threatening opportunity

for conversation and feedback. Our novel relationship quickly deepened, eroding the at

times power-laden boundaries of researcher and participant, intensifying the shared

learning resulting in multi-layered findings.

Another notable similarity between the two SSAOs is their preference to discuss

dominant rather than subordinated identities. Both John and Lynne appear uncomfortable

discussing their non-privileged identities. For John, after hearing him refer in jest several

times to having Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), I asked if he actually had the

diagnosis. He confirmed that he does, and subsequently gave several examples of the

ways he has learned to manage the disability, including incorporating movement into his

daily routine. When I suggested that this non-dominant identity affords him an

opportunity to better understand subordinated identities others possess, he became

uncomfortable with my comment and changed the subject. Similarly, Lynne was averse

to talking about her gender identity, and specifically about the impact of sexism on her

work as an SSAO. Despite participating in an informal women's mentoring group, and

besides noting the perceived gender balance in meetings, Lynne was reluctant to position

her gender as salient to her professional career. Notably, John was more likely to refer to himself as a privileged white man, whereas Lynn avoided personal identity-based categorization altogether.

Both John and Lynne are remarkably skilled at interpersonal communication. Each possess strong listening skills and are exceptional at running meetings. The ability to effectively facilitate a group meeting demands keen verbal and nonverbal skills and an understanding of the individual and political dynamics manifesting inter- and intrapersonally. John and Lynne both compliment others in public and criticize in private, causing employees to feel validated, predicting a strong work ethic stemming from feelings of support. It is unclear if John and Lynne honed these interpersonal skills over decades of professional work, or if they are more inherent character assets. Regardless, they each possess exceptional interpersonal skills which they leverage for effective leadership.

Divergence

When comparing SSAO social justice leadership, some notable differences also arise. The first relates to how rapport was built between me and the SSAO, and how my perceptions of comfort level changed throughout the shadowing experience. John seemed immediately comfortable with me and was incredibly vulnerable, granting me virtually universal access to his workday from project inception. This immediate comfort may have stemmed from our sharing most social identities including race and gender. As the observation period continued, more opportunities arose for me to contribute to meetings and conversations. For example, having conducted trainings on sexual

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orientation and trans* issues, I am comfortable talking about gender, sex, sexuality, and the differences between these concepts. This resulted in me offering feedback to John and his director of residential life about how to navigate their trans* student, Mario. Toward the end of the observation period John frequently asked for my advice, and seemed to do more second-guessing of his decisions with me present. I do not think John felt judged by my presence, but as I was able to demonstrate competence throughout the week, it appeared that John became less comfortable and more guarded. Conversely, Lynne was notably guarded in her self-disclosure and her willingness to incorporate me into her calendar early in the shadowing experience. Tellingly, at the end of our time together, she shared with me that she initially dreaded my time on campus. However as the week progressed Lynne became increasingly vulnerable and her comfort level grew exponentially.

Another salient difference was that John seemed invigorated when talking about privilege abstractly and also when talking about his personal lived experiences with privilege. John enjoyed exploring the tensions of his embodiment of privilege, notably his race, gender, sexuality, and religion, and we spent substantial time unpacking how and when he is aware and unaware of how privilege influences his leadership practice. Conversely, Lynn was less likely to unpack her personal privilege. When retelling the story about her experience with the woman of color during a state leadership program, Lynn reported that it was "absolutely exhausting" learning about white privilege and her responsibility stemming from that privilege. She demonstrated a strong interest in exploring her social justice leadership praxis, however when that reflection became about

how her personal identities inform her practices, namely gender and race, Lynn seemed less invigorated by the conversation.

Another notable difference is that John seemed very concerned with how those in his division perceive him, whereas Lynne appeared less concerned about these perceptions. Perhaps this is because John is new to the SSAO role, whereas Lynne has a longer tenure, and he is still forming his reputation and collegial perception. I also think John, due in part to his drastic career change from law enforcement, is less actualized as a student affairs professional due to limited time in the profession, resulting in reduced confidence. Lynne, having spent most of her career on a college campus, being married to a retired professor and the daughter of a college instructor, is extremely comfortable in the higher education setting where she has spent most of her professional life.

Implications

Implications from this research are individually identified by readers, so the few ideas presented here are not intended to limit or truncate alternative utility realized from this dissertation. One key implication of profound salience is the need for social justice training for SSAOs. Unless a component of graduate preparation programs, and if not intentionally sought out by SSAOs, a dearth of SJ training opportunities exists for top higher education leaders. Most social justice training opportunities in higher education, including the popular Social Justice Training Institute (Social Justice Training Institute, n.d.), are frequented by participants early in their careers. Social justice focused conferences, including the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE), the White Privilege Conference (WPC), and the NASPA Multicultural Institute, provide

opportunities for authentic and personal training and transformation. However these

conferences are often viewed as dispensable given the competing priorities for SSAO

time and resources, and neither John or Lynne has attended these or other explicitly

social justice focused conferences.

Finally, I learned from my dissertation pilot study (See appendix F) that an

invitation-only group of 30 well-connected SSAOs exists, offering phenomenal

opportunities for networking and social justice capacity building. However this selective

group is clearly not accessible to the majority of SSAOs and neither John nor Lynne are

members. The two primary student affairs professional organizations, NASPA and

ACPA, have programming for SSAOs, however none centers social justice leadership.

This leaves SSAOs, who are typically in the last quarter of their professional careers, to

pursue personal growth related to SJ a priority. Moreover, if a SSAO has not engaged in

a career-long commitment to social justice, and have still been successful to the point of

securing a VP position, incentives to focus on social justice may prove elusive.

An opportunity for evolving the personal and professional understanding of social

justice leadership praxis for SSAOs is individualized consulting. Higher education is

flooded with consultants, from well-known and established for-profit groups such as

Noel-Levitz (Noel-Levitz, n. d.), to social justice consultants who lead strategic planning

exercises and staff trainings. However little consulting is specifically directed at SSAOs

themselves. The two participants in this study remarked at how much they enjoyed and

benefited from the shadowing experience, and each indicated the potential benefits to

other SSAOs were they to engage in a similar shadowing experience. The substantial

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time dedicated to learning about each SSAO and their social justice leadership praxis provides unparalleled insight into the nuances and subtleties of the art of leading. This intimacy creates the conditions for feedback unavailable via other professional development opportunities, including existing consulting opportunities.

A more abstract implication of this dissertation research is that incremental social justice activism may not be enough to drastically change educational institutions. Each participant initiated incremental or piecemeal social justice action, such as suggesting gender-neutral housing or being a symbolic supporter of social justice campus programming. This is consistent with Meyerson's (2001) finding that social justice praxis resulting in changes to policies and procedures is typically blunted and incremental. Jayakumar (2012) concurs with this observation of social justice conservatism:

> Even well-intentioned and racially conscious administrators and faculty of color, and White allies with a commitment to organization actions and values inclusive of communities of color, often proceed with caution in outspokenly challenging upper-level administrators higher in the chain of command in the university power structure. (p. 131)

Both SSAOs in this study engage with social justice activism cautiously. This may be an intentional strategy to remain employed, and perhaps these leaders engage in longitudinal social justice activism at the vice presidential organizational level as a means of politically savvy survival. It may also be the case that I was unable to observe and was not told about additional examples of social justice activism on behalf of John and Lynne. Regardless, these leaders have substantial autonomy and power within their own

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divisions, and brazen social justice leadership within this large sphere of influence is needed for higher education to achieve goals of inclusivity.

Audacious social justice leadership for praxis, to be impactful, necessitates an understanding of larger organizational and cultural power structures. Eisner (1994) explains, "Ideologies in general are belief systems that provide the value premises from which decisions about practical educational matters are made" (p. 47). Therefore one must identify the ideological and belief systems at play in an organization before engaging in effective social justice activism. This identification process can be cumbersome, as the field of higher education is burdened by a lack of awareness or acknowledgment of the paradigmatic ontologies and epistemologies underlining practice (Guido, Chávez, & Lincoln, 2010). When a lack of awareness exists of the underlying values, assumptions, and beliefs informing organizational operations, cooption and manipulation are probable; with an oppressive operational status quo likely prevailing. The status quo is maintained through manipulative discourse designed to centralize power:

> When one is working in complex organizations that do not lend themselves well to systematic control and long-range planning or prediction, the illusion of control and prediction can be secured by using language from domains where control and prediction are possible. (Eisner, 1994, p. 361)

In the United States higher education setting, these domains of control increasingly stem from educational foundations creating and reproducing a technocratic educational hegemony (Anderson, Barone, Sun, & Bowlby, in press). Therefore this neoliberal technocraticism and external influence must be named and critiqued. One regional example relevant particularly for Land Grant University is the influence of the oil and gas

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industry. The industry has a significant presence in the region, generating substantial

economic opportunities, and the university has largely embraced the resources associated

sponsorship of building and research laboratories. However the larger impact of this

public-private partnership, the potential influence on curricula and pedagogy, and the

associated socialization or perhaps indoctrination of students, is largely uncritiqued based

on my time on campus.

The neoliberal thought behind the increasing focus on technocratism in U.S.

higher education has found malleable governments, systems, institutions, and public at

large. Unless a visible and racial counter-narrative evolves, the status quo of

neoliberalism will continue to flourish (Giroux, 2007). Harvey (2005) offers a strategy

frequently employed to create and maintain hegemony:

> For any way of thought to become dominant, a conceptual apparatus has to be
> advanced that appeals to our intuitions and instincts, to our values and our desires,
> as well as to the possibilities inherent in the social world we inhabit. If successful,
> this conceptual apparatus becomes so embedded in common sense as to be taken
> for granted and not open to question. (p. 5)

The insidiousness of hegemony is "lived out a thousand times a day in our intimate

behaviors, glances, body postures, in the fleeting calculations we make on how to look at

and speak to each other, and in the continuous microdecisions that coalesce into a life"

(Brookfield, 2005, pp. 96-97). Neoliberal thinking supports a technocratic hegemony

which centers privatization, efficiency, and economic rationality as the solutions to

educational issues (Apple, 2001). These solutions, justified through the guise of

"equity," have an adverse impact on educational outcomes for students historically

marginalized in society, including students of color and first generation college students (Harris III & Bensimon, 2007).

Extending the analysis of neoliberal and conservative artifacts on campus beyond buildings and sponsorship, co-cirricular programming also offers insight into the social justice or diversity efforts of a college campus. Uncritical engagement with token gestures under the guise of social justice may result in depoliticized campus events such as a taco day purporting to be about Hispanic heritage, or a MLK celebration without a discussion about socio-economic status or capitalism (Gorski, 2006, 2013). These kinds of programs may function to do more harm than good because they reify a master narrative of equality and a level playing field failing to engage an exploration of power and institutionalized privilege (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; Kincheloe, Steinberg, Rodriguez, & Chennault, 1998). John and Lynne are caught in an abyss of good social justice intention and a lack of training to effectively operationalize these intentions to realize true emancipatory social justice praxis. One of the challenges to employing social justice praxis is the ever-present neoliberal thought and related influences pushing higher education culture toward maintenance of the status quo. This hegemonic narrative embraces cultural awareness raising events which are unthreatening to the larger educational milieu. Political social justice foci including Israeli divestment, the role and support for ethnic studies and Queer studies, rape supportive cultures on campus, and the backlash to race-conscious policies including Affirmative Action, represent more social justice potential than a campus Luau.

If the field of higher education in student affairs is to help or lead the resistance to oppressive neoliberalism, SSAOs as the student affairs leaders with the most power and influence, must champion the charge. This will take incredible capacity building and activist commitment. And the student-centeredness central to the values of our profession demand nothing less. One opportunity for social justice transformation spearheaded by SSAOs relates to the earlier cited charge from Giroux (2007) and Pasque (2010) for education leaders to use public good notions of education to motivate change. The public good view of U.S. education which Giroux (2007) and Pasque (2010) present owes much of its foundation to Dewey (1916) and his view of education as a public good. Notably, that Du Bois (1903) and other scholars of color were also engaged in similar scholarship is often forgotten. Coming full circle, Eisner cites Dewey as the pivotal thinker motivating the epistemology behind educational criticism and connoisseurship. Therefore the contemporary foundation for social justice praxis, using public good arguments, can be grounded by century-old visionary scholarship and thinking.

A strong foundation has been laid for SSAOs to lead the social justice charge to transform U.S. higher education. Will these leaders heed the call?

Limitations

Several limitations are relevant to note related to this study. Educational Criticism demands connoisseurship on behalf of the researcher (Eisner, 1998, 2002), and while I have more than ten years of experience in the field of higher education, my relative youth offers both unique opportunities in terms of a fresh perspective and some limitations in terms of naiveté. The data collection strategies, specifically in relation to

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duration of observation, may also represent a limitation. While each SSAO and I mutually and very organically identified a saturation point for data collection, it is likely that novel finding may have been collected were I to have remained in the field longer.

The decision to not audio-tape and transcribe meetings and informal interactions with the SSAO and other people may function to offer a somewhat limited depiction of nuances of interpersonal exchanges. Quotations are a powerful way to present data, and my ability to accurately capture lengthy statements verbatim is limited. Related to coding procedures, it may have been beneficial to enlist additional coders to help offer new insights into the data. Finally, because educational criticism and connoisseurship relies upon the narrative to present data, the study is limited by my writing prowess, or lack thereof. Some of these limitations result from research design, and could be addressed with future research. Others are related to the length of time in the field, which if prolonged will always offer additional insights, though perhaps blunted by redundancy. A longitudinal study of SSAO social justice leadership praxis may address many of the mentioned limitations.

Opportunities for Future Research

The aim of this research is to help educators ask more evolved questions related to leadership, social justice, and social justice leadership as performed by SSAOs. Therefore opportunities for future research stemming from this dissertation will be individually identified by interested parties. Nonetheless, I offer some ideas which like the conclusions in this chapter, are not intended to retard creative thinking beyond these limited thoughts.

The first opportunity for future research stemming from this dissertation relates to length of time for data collection. While the research presented in this dissertation involved seven days of data collection at each site, more longitudinal data collection may reveal unique insights. As both SSAOs who participated in this study were extremely interested in critical feedback on social justice leadership, presumably as a tool to help them improve, returning to the sites to study any longitudinal changes may reveal novel findings.

Second, the protocol used for this dissertation centers the individual SSAO as the unit of analysis. Changing the unit of analysis to a university, a division, a unit, a department, or even an office would create new findings building on the research presented here. Additionally, a protocol with the SSAO as the unit of analysis could be adjusted to focus more on the people surrounding the SSAO. Moreover, SSAOs could be selected for having a strong reputation in the field of higher education as exemplary social justice leaders.

Third, while the intention of this research is not to generalize findings, additional SSAOs with diverse identities and backgrounds, operating in a myriad of institutional types and settings, may also reveal rich data. Finally, the employment of different qualitative methodologies, perhaps case study or phenomenology, may also reveal worthy findings helping deepen the understanding of the art of social justice leadership praxis.

Epilogue

     The following unnarrated poem concludes this dissertation, giving space for

individual interpretation. The poem frames my motivations for pursuing a doctorate and

for completing this research.

<center>White Lies</center>

<center>by ryan barone</center>

My first-generation US citizen, Irish-Catholic, grandmother died at the age of 68 years

young on her bathroom floor of a brain aneurysm.

She was unsuccessfully administered CPR by the EMT's on the floor of her bathroom,

transported to the hospital, and declared dead at Buffalo General Hospital, wearing the

bright orange, extra-large, "Gay (question mark), Fine by Me," t-shirt I had given her two

months earlier for Christmas.

This poem is for her.

1985. Akron, New York.

22 miles from downtown Buffalo on land stolen from the Seneca Nation, Tonawanda

Tribe. A fact easily ignored were the border of a swamp, The Rez, not two miles from

where I grew up.

My mother is 24 with two kids and pregnant with her third. My drunk dad reluctantly

trades in his beard and CB Radio handle of "Lone Pine" for a ill-fitting suit and the

meager commission Prudential offered him to work 70 hours a week.

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My grandmother, asks to see my kindergarten curriculum for Black History Month. My grandmother, who sought and respectfully declined apartment leases on the east side of Buffalo, and when two hours later her black friend was told by the same landlord the apartment was not available, would call up channel 7 news and confront the landlord, on live TV, with her black friend at her side.

This 4 foot 2 fat Irish lady who laughed too loud and drank too much, tells me that what I am learning in kindergarten about Black people is nothing but white lies. So Margaret Dailey Barone comes into my classroom with pictures and books in tow, and delivers a compelling history lesson on civil rights for Mrs. Dayhill's class. See my grandmother and her World War Two veteran husband from Sicily worked in a grocery store on Harlem Road, in Buffalo New York, in a neighborhood ironically as homogeneous as Harlem in the City.

It was just homogenous with Europeans doing their very best to become white. And they did. And they told many white lies.

13 April, 1986

Akron, New York

My 6th Birthday Party,

I hoped the pool would be open. It never was in April, in Buffalo. My birthday party was wrapping up when Ryan Sundown coyly and politely asks my mom if he can take home some leftovers. She obliges, and when his grandmother picks him up her embarrassment is masked only by the sound of her muffler-less car.

See Ryan did not have a lot of money for food. And this fact helped construct a narrative for me that people who lived on the Rez watered down the gas, and filled their cheap cigarettes with extra nicotine to buy more gas and more cigarettes. And of course booze. A white lie whose contradiction I did not see until my friend Ryan took leftovers from my birthday party.

1989. Akron, New York.

I watch my teacher Mr. Bennett make a bet with Mr. Rogers that I would beat his student in the 4th grade geography bee. I win, and spend the rest of elementary school not in remedial speech class where I had spent my first three years, but at the smart table with Jacinta Penzack from Poland, and six other white kids. We are told we **earned** a special curriculum and special homework.

More White lies.

1990. Akron, New York.

My time with smart kids is paying off. My 5th grade submission to the local Invention Convention took me to the state competition where my "Newspaper Detector Reflector" gets me the 1st place championship for New York State. An article in the Buffalo News whose headline reads, "He's Smart," and I am honored at an assembly for the entire elementary school. The principle says I am a bright kid, with endless potential, **who deserves** all I will receive.

More White lies.

1993. Akron, NY

Brian Regan and Brian Farrell, two years my senior, ask me if I smoke cigarettes on our

morning school bus. I know I cannot tell them I smoke the very un-cool generic NOW

Brand cigarettes I steal from my dad. And I want to be cool. So I say yes. They ask me

what I kind I smoke. I say, Mara-bos.

I never ride that bus again without being called the Mara-bo man.

A title I gladly exchange each afternoon for "Gunat," the derogatory slur unrelentingly

hurled at me on my after school bus, accompanied only by gleeking, resulting in my hair

being dripping wet with spit as our bus speeds from trailer home to shotgun house on the

Rez. I get dropped off last each afternoon as the sun is setting in the western sky over a

field of feed corn. The only white kid, sitting in the front seat hoping each day the white

bus driver will intervene.

She never does.

1997. Akron, New York

My mom **insists** on me being placed in AP English despite my 87 GPA which typically

relegates kids to "regular" English classes. I read my favorite poem by Edgar Allan Poe,

The Raven. Mrs. Stevens then asks me for some adjectives to describe the poem. Then

she tells me I was wrong. I tell her it is subjective. She tells me I was wrong.

I tell her she is an idiot and is trying to stifle kids creativity because she is too fat, stupid,

and lazy to teach anything other than the same books she had been using for past 20

years. I think my principal agrees, but a week's detention contradicts the theory. I

receive a two out of five on my AP English test that year, making Mrs. Stevens look bad.

I am thrilled to trade my would-have-been college credit for righteous vindication that highlights her white lies.

1998. Fredonia, New York

Dr. Joe Chilberg tells me it was refreshing to see a **man** so committed to his academics in the Communication Department. He appoints me president of the Applied Communication Association. And makes me the head TA for his fundamentals class, a burden-filled honor only previously bestowed upon graduate students. In exchange, I have to put up with his never-ending racist jokes and objectifying comments about the bodies of female students in our class. No wonder he makes us analyze the movie American Beauty. A kind of arrogant affront reserved only for tenured white men at our PWI. He tells me he would help me out however he can, because I reminded him, of himself.

More White lies. I hope.

1999. Fredonia, New York.

Dr. Adrianne McCormick. My first Women's Studies professor, has me read poetry about womyn, by womyn, and for womyn. And she gives me the greatest educational gift of my entire academic career. She disrupts 19 years of educational indoctrination of white male supremacy when she does not immediately call on me when I raise my hand in class. Something I had never experienced before.

2002. Fredonia, New York

The white university President calls me down to his office. I had been nominated for the

top recognition for all graduating students at Fredonia, the prestigious Landford

Presidential Prize, named for the white man who was Chancellor of the SUNY system for

most of the 80's and 90's. Fredonia President Dennis Hefner tells me there were two

other finalists, both women, who had higher GPA's than mine. But that my "intangible

qualifications" separate me from the group. And that he is thrilled to give me the award.

The first (white) man to win in 7 years. And that I deserve it.

More White lies.

2003-2004. All over North America

My education between formal educations. Where I learn more in 12 months, than my

proceeding 17 years of formal schooling, and my subsequent 6 years of graduate school.

Living in my cherry-red 1995 four cylinder Volkswagen Jetta for six months, and in the

back of a 95 Chevy S-10 pickup truck for another six. I get sober. Eat oatmeal. Journal.

Read. And start a life-long journey to unlearn the unrelenting, unwavering, White lies I

have been taught for 22 years.

2004. Ithaca, New York.

My little brother's graduation party. His mentor, and the Vice President for Student

Affairs at his school, asks me about graduate school. I tell him I was going to Colorado

State University. He is thrilled and tells me that us white men are a dying breed in

Student Affairs, and that he will do all he can to help me be successful.

"Dr. White, I am very grateful for the mentoring you have offered my brother, and it was kind of you to come to this graduation party. And, I must respond to your statement about us white men being a dying breed in our field. I am increasingly aware of the fact that my presence in this country, on stolen Native land, has been informed by white male privilege. I am a fourth-generation European-American whose Irish and Sicilian ancestors made a very intentional decision to become white decades ago. Subsequently, my Papa benefited from the G.I. Bill upon his return from World War II, a bill virtually inaccessible to men of color in this country. While my parents did not go to college, the equity from my Papa's profession, social and monetary, laid the foundation for me to attend the predominantly white institutions I am comfortable calling home. The academic, professional, and social structures of these higher education institutions reflect a kind of whiteness which I find comforting and accessible. I have learned almost exclusively white history, language, etiquette, and design in these institutions. If people who look like you and I are a dying breed in Student Affairs, it is a welcome change, and is in fact astonishing given the constant privileging of white men's experiences. So I will not take you up on your offer, Sir, and I hope you critically reflect on the impact such a paradigm has on the experiences of your colleagues, subordinates, and students at your university. I would welcome future and frequent contact with you, as I know I can learn a lot from your experience. However, I will reciprocate only if the parameters of this relationship contain our conversations to developing deeper mutual understanding of the overt and subtle impact of power, privilege, and oppression on systems in our shared field."

These well crafted and intentional words, were never uttered from my mouth, allowing

his white lies to pollute that beautiful Spring day in upstate New York on a Finger lake,

like an LA Smog on a hot August day.

2006. Fort Collins, Colorado

Dr. May Fu. Newly arrived Ethnic Studies professor from California and lover of spoken

word and edamame, just like me, asks me to guest lecturer in her mostly white class

about racial privilege after a white guy asked her in class where she was from. For the

third time. I go into the class and talk about gender privilege. Copping out. I tell her I

was sorry. I got nervous. Gender is more comfortable for me. She is disappointed, but

she has so few allies. So she asks me to talk to her white male friend who teaches in the

history department about South East Asia, and does not understand his racial privilege. I

tell her I am scared. He has a PhD, I don't. Dr. Fu is disappointed. But she has so few

allies. Including me.

February, 2014. Fort Collins, Colorado

The world is a six dollar, yuppie cupcake sold to hipsters in Austin out of an old van.

My white skin the wrapper, generational privilege the cake, and educational attainment

the frosting. However I will not devour the sugary treat with the gluttony of white

privilege so common among my people. I cannot keep telling, or failing to interrupt,

white lies. My glass escalator is functioning as designed passing countless glass ceilings

as I ascend. The weight of responsibility I feel is outweighed only by the opportunity I

have. This is my real education. I will infiltrate. I will disrupt. I will help re-construct.

My grandmother would have it no other way.

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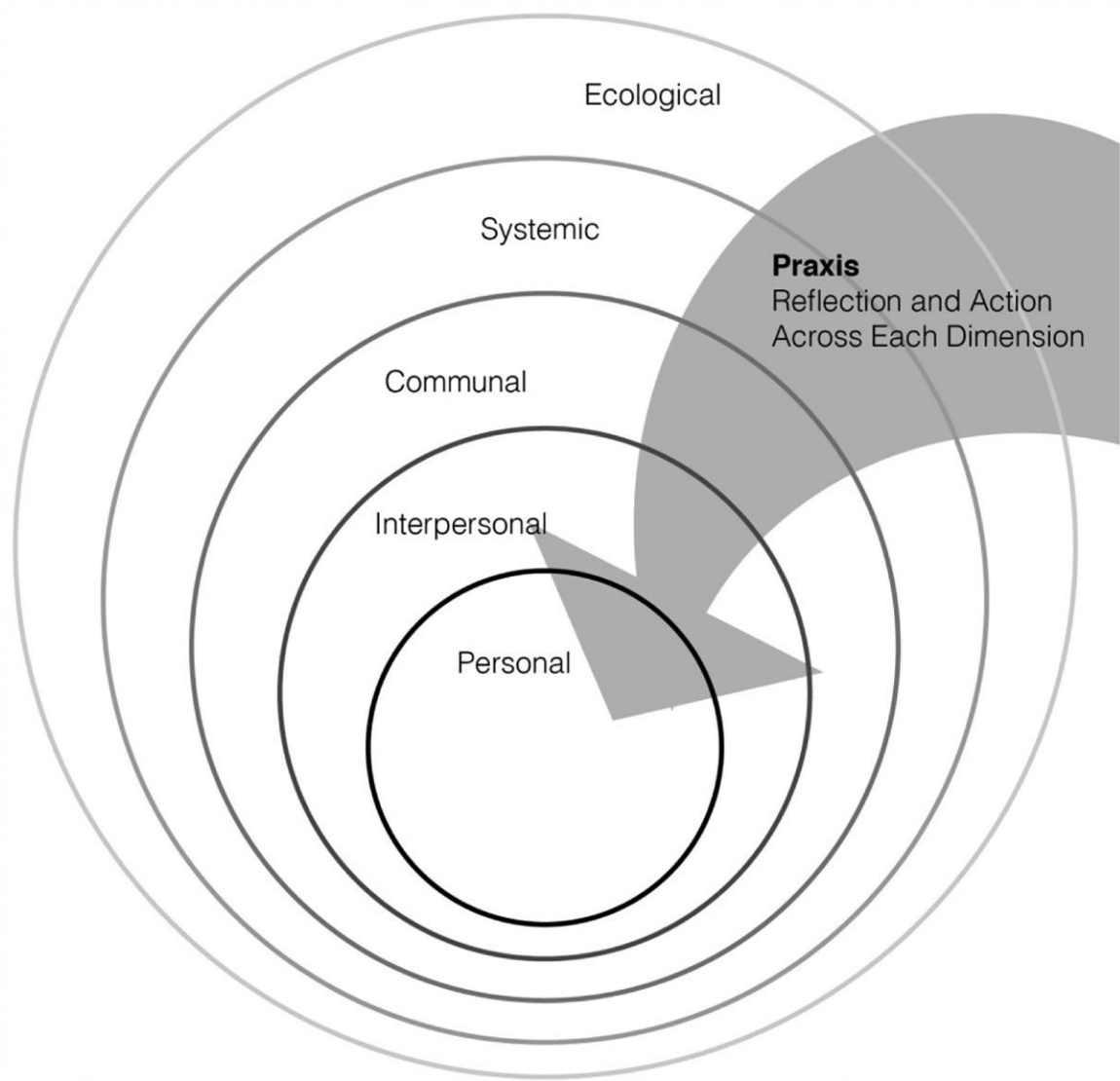
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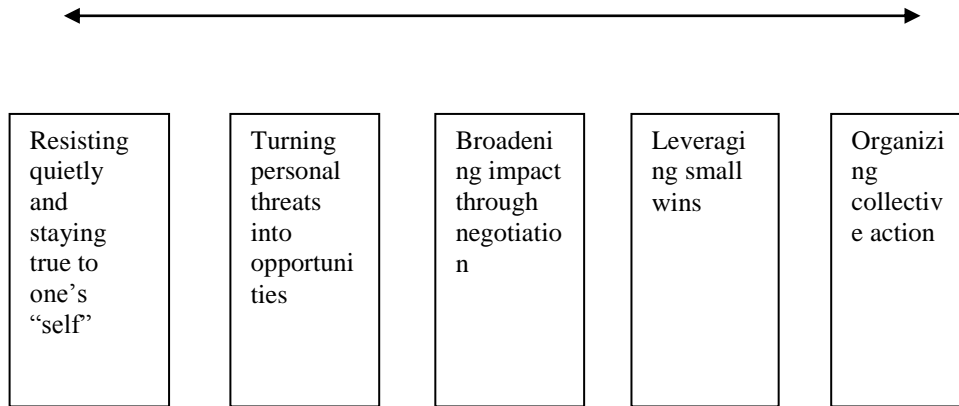
Appendix A

The Dimensions of Social Justice Leadership Practice

Ecological

Systemic

Praxis
Reflection and Action
Across Each Dimension

Communal

Interpersonal

Personal

Furman, G. (2012)

Appendix B

How Tempered Radicals Make a Difference

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Resisting quietly and staying true to one's "self"	Turning personal threats into opportunities	Broadening impact through negotiation	Leveraging small wins	Organizing collective action

Meyerson, D. E. (2001).

Posionality Statement Poem

Dying Breed

ryan barone

"It's so refreshing!!
A man...
A white guy...
A straight guy...

Who is bright, who cares about academics, who works hard. You know....you remind
me.........of me! I want to be your mentor!"
said
Dr. Chilberg, 1999
Dr. Herman, 2002
Dr. Franco, 2004
Dr. Sears, 2009
Mr. Kremer, 2010
"We are a dying breed in student affairs Ryan."

Thus, the glass escalator appears.....shuffling me along, like my personal popemobile.

Yes, I am credentialing,
Yes, I am gaining access,
To a game created by, for, and today largely maintained by people like me.

Like the Tour de France during Lance Armstrong's doping years.
All of them.
The game is rigged and I know the hidden rules:
firm handshake,
verbal reference in the form of "Sir,"

fabricated humility laced with confidence,

short declarative un-disclaimed statements and,

self-deprecating humor.

So, as I join the old boys club I do so using

My identities.

My body.

My privilege.

To infiltrate, transform, parlay, leverage, and capitalize.

Like a Ivy-League trained, three-piece suit, 30something Manhattan hedge fund

manager,

pre "too big to fail."

An accountable and righteous activist,

more Malcolm than Martin

more Cynthia than Hilary,

more Dennis than Barak,

seeking to exterminate the monopoly of generational privilege,

Making extinct the dying breed of people with privilege making shitty decisions,

like George, Dick, and Donald.

Not like the gray wolf but like the pay phone,

unnecessary,

antiquated,

redundant.

My PhD,

an expensive degree,

putting me on a journey,

to consistently,

humbly,

and unwaveringly,

learn vigorously,

about myself, and how I can have the biggest impact with my people in a responsible community.

A traitor?
Perhaps.
But more Snodwen than Benedict.
Reminding myself of centuries of Australian Aboriginal knowledge encapsulated in the following:

"If you have come to help me, please go home. But if you have come because your liberation is somehow bound with mine, then we may work together."

Appendix D

Demographic Sheet and Interview Questions

Demographics: (to be administered via a written questioner in person after informed consent is obtained)

Age:
Race(s):
Ethnicity(s):
Gender(s):
Sexual Orientation(s):
Ability/disability(s):
Socio-economic status growing up:
Are you a first-generation college student (yes or no):

Introductory questions may include:
- For how long have you been an SSAO, and what has been your professional path to this position?
  - Have you always aspired to this role?
- What do you see as the primary functions of your position?
  - Who established your primary job responsibilities?
- What do you see as essential characteristics of an effective SSAO?
- What are your strengths and limitations in the position?

Social Justice questions may include:
- Does your leadership intentionally involve working toward social justice goals?
  - If so, how? Can you share some examples? Is this work typically visible to others? Who?
- What role do your personal social identities play in your leadership?
- What kind of training do you have related to social justice?
- What role does your college/university president play in your social justice work? Are they a help/support, or a hindrance/deterrent?
- If I were to ask at random five of your employees how you are committed to social justice, what would they say?
- Do you have an example of your commitment to social justice?

Activism questions may include:
- Please share your initial responses to the following words in the context of YOUR SSAO leadership in higher education
  - Tempered
  - Diplomatic

- o Incrementlist
- o Pragmatist
- o Visionary
- o Radical
- o Utopian
    - ▪ Which of these words resonate the most with you when you think of your leadership?
- Are you more tempered--or more radical--in your social justice advocacy today than you were when you began your career?
    - o Do you have examples to demonstrate this?
    - o Do your social identities impact how you engage in social justice advocacy
- Can you identify any instances when an attempt has been made to quiet or temper your social justice work?
    - o Have these messages/instanced been subtle? Overt? How have you responded?
    - o Have you employed specific strategies throughout your career to avoid being co-opted by people/institutions seeking to perpetuate privilege?

Concluding questions may include::
- How are you accountable for your social justice leadership to constituencies on campus? In the community?
- What impact do you think your leadership has had on social justice causes on your campus?
    - o What is your proudest achievement related to social justice?
    - o What is your biggest regret related to social justice?
- What advice do you have for a person aspiring to be an SSAO who is committed to social justice?
- Is there anything I did not ask you about that you thought I would?
- Do you have anything else you care to share?

Appendix E

Consent Form

Study: A Critical Examination of Senior Student Affairs Officers' Leadership Practices: In Search of Social Justice Praxis

You are invited to participate in a study that will explore the social justice leadership strategies employed by Senior Student Affairs Officers. The study is conducted by Ryan Barone. Results will be used to help complete a doctoral dissertation, and results may also be disseminated at a national higher education conferences and/or for publication in a higher education journal. Ryan Barone can be reached at 303-246-9925/Ryan.Barone@DU.edu. This project is supervised by Dr. Bruce **Uhrmacher**, Morgridge College of Education, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208, 303.871.2483, buhrmach@du.edu.

Participation will include being interviewed by the researcher about social justice leadership strategies, observation in every day work settings, and analysis of documents relevant to this study. Overall length of observation will be five business days. Two structured interviews are anticipated to take approximately two hours of your time each. Informal interviews will occur each morning and each afternoon, and are anticipant to take approximately 30 minutes of your time each. Observation, including shadowing you throughout your work day, is anticipated to last for 6-8 hours during the day/evening as the workday is extended.

The risks associated with this project are minimal. If, however, you experience discomfort you may discontinue the interview or observation at any time. We respect your right to choose not to answer any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. Refusal to participate or withdrawal from participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your responses will be identified by code number only and will be kept separate from information that could identify you. This is done to protect the confidentiality of your responses. A pseudonym will be used to protect your identity in transcripts and final report. Only the researcher and the faculty will have access to your raw individual data. However, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena. Although no questions in this interview address it, we are required by law to tell you that if information is revealed concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse and neglect, it is required by law that this be reported to the proper authorities.

If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the interview, please contact Paul Olk, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at 303-871-4531, or you may email du-irb@du.edu, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs or call 303-871-4050 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121. You may keep this page for your records. Please sign the next page if you understand and agree to the above. If you do not understand any part of the above statement, please ask the researcher any questions you have.

I have read and understood the foregoing descriptions of the study called Social Justice Leadership Practices by Senior Student Affairs Officers. I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to participate in this study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature _____ Date _____

___ I agree to be audiotaped.
___ I do not agree to be audiotaped.
Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix F

Dissertation Pilot Study Narrative

The Unused Comfortable Couch

Louise[3] and I decide to meet at 7:45am so we would have time to talk before the 8:00am meeting she leads discussing sporting events and fan behavior. Being from New York and low-context, I arrive at 7:30am to find Louise already in her office having the very important "meeting before the meeting." Her administrative assistant greets me as she makes copies of the meeting agenda, appearing simultaneously rushed and relaxed as she flutters from the copy machine to her desk while she directs me to the coffee, a gesture which I greatly appreciate. No one else is visible in the office suite with seven center cubicles facing six exterior offices with name plates that all read "Dr." I laugh to myself as I recall my confusion freshman year in college because my Human Communication class was taught by a doctor; an odd concept to me because the only doctors I had ever known growing up were fond of telling me to turn and cough as they checked my hernia. I wonder if any other first-generation college students, like me, would be confused walking into the Vice President for Student Affairs suite and finding an odd-looking doctors office.

Louise warmly greets me at 7:50am and welcomes me into her expansive corner office facing both south and west currently being drenched by unmolested morning sun. She invites me to sit at the six-person conference table in her office, positioning me directly beneath a poster from a campus Black History Month event from 1996 with a picture of both Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr; an irony not lost on me as the day is 28 February, the last day of Black History Month. No other pictures of famous people adorn her sizeable office walls. I come to learn that everything in her office is very intentional and her celebration of both Malcolm and Martin represents the reconciliation of often contradictory aspects of her life: the first in her family to attend college and the leader before me managing a division of more than 600 full time employees and an overall budget exceeding 110 million dollars. The woman who had a child before the age of 20, a life event strongly correlated to working class struggle for poor, southern, African American women in her demographic and the first person of color to sit in this office in its 130 year history.

Louise, having just dismissed the committee co-chairs from athletics and student affairs from her office, is remarkably present and un-distracted with me for the eight minutes we have before we enter the meeting with 15 campus administrators and student leaders. I thank Louise for the opportunity, review my research protocol, and we enter the conference room with a remarkably bright and generous floral centerpiece which I could not help but coyly touch three minutes into the meeting, leading to the contradiction of my earlier certainty that the plant was real. Louise performs Vice President with the grace and ease of a twenty-year veteran bus driver in Boston navigating a snake-like path through the city as she promptly and warmly begins the

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[3] Pseudonym

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meeting with small talk about the university men's basketball team's win last night. I can tell this day-long shadowing experience is going to rich and eventful.

As a Vice President for Student Affairs at a large research university, Louise has substantial power and influence over the functions of the university. And, as a person of color at an institution with 85% white students, 87% white faculty, 88% white staff, and virtually all executives at her level being white, race is salient for Louise. When asked about her social justice leadership at the university, she shares the importance of diversifying the university with people who integrate their identities and their leadership:

> How do you get diverse perspectives if you don't have diverse people, who have those perspectives? Not just diverse people, but diverse people who have diverse perspectives, in a room…I can make change at a level that other people aren't at yet. And I really feel a tremendous responsibility around doing that. And whatever I do, I carry the fact that I am a first generation, African American, mother, sister, grew up in segregation…all of that is part of who I am, and how I view the world. And, it's important for me to know that. That informs my perspective.

This perspective also helps Louise understand, that whether she desires it or not, she is a role model for younger professionals, particularly students of color, and most specifically Black women. Though she never intentionally longed to be a role-model or mentor, Louise has the maturity to understand that she functions in this capacity. This perspective also helps Louise understand that she is and will continue to be a role model for younger professionals, particularly students of color, and most specifically Black women:

> There are some people who get in these positions and say I don't want to be a role model, I mean, why me, I got here on my own and just because I am African American or Hispanic or whatever, why do I have to? And I'm like, because. Really? Because of the history of this country, and it's bigger than you. And whether you chose to be or not, you are. And so for me, that's a really important piece of why I like this position. Because I want other people, other women, other first gen students, other African Americans or other people of color to say, hey, if she could do this, so can I. There is nothing special about her, which we all think, there has to be something special about people in these positions. So I spend a lot of time trying to tell people I am not that special, you know, I am just a regular person like everybody else who took advantage of opportunities, and that's what you need to do, and good mentorship.

Louise recognizes that she is under a microscope, and that even her attire and the way she does her hair are political. Recently styling her hair naturally for the first time in decades, Louise reflects on how many young Black women have told her that they appreciate her choice; that it gives them permission to express themselves similarly if they choose.

Despite Louise's humility, she is a special leader. Her social justice advocacy is more calculated than radical, as she shares that she has only publicly spoken to an impromptu crowd about a social justice issue twice, once in 1991 after a Rodney King rally, and another time more recently about a racist incident related to Native American

students on campus. On Meyerson's (2001) continuum of what she calls *Tempered Radicals* (see the Appendix), Louise would fall on the midpoint of *broadening impact through negotiation*. She is not always the most vocal about social justice issues, but rather leverages her strong relationships with diverse campus constituencies to influence policy and procedures in a calculated manner. This is how she motivates change on campus, through strategic partnerships and subtle actions. Louise is a politically savvy social justice leader who contextualizes urgent issues historically with a longitudinal view of organizational change.

Late in the afternoon with Louise on her third Diet Coke for the day, for the first time my attention shifts to her non-descript yet confident physical portrayal. She shared earlier in our interview that she hates, and has always hated, dresses. I therefore suspect her understated black sweater, gray pants, gray and black scarf, small black earrings, and brown rim angular Bebe glasses are typical attire communicating both professionalism and humility. This physical presentation, coupled with her warm non-verbal gestures and tone, makes even her assertiveness feel welcoming and invitational.

Before the afternoon's "Town-Gown" meeting we walk strategically through narrow bridges connecting the student center and the engineering building, protecting us from the now windy and overcast afternoon elements as we left our coats in Louise's office earlier that morning. She shares with me that she has little patience for one person who will be in our afternoon meeting. This disclosure represents the first unqualified negative statement Louise has made about another person all day; therefore I mentally mark the comment as significant. Louise is at least a foot shorter than me, and as we trek across campus we take turns adjusting our strides to accommodate the other person like an awkward couple at their second ballroom dancing lesson. She shares that this man plays several different roles at the university and in the community, and that he is one of, "those guys who likes to hear himself talk." I resist my urge to probe further and decide against asking her if he is White, as I find myself already writing a narrative about how this man looks and acts given the incomplete information shared with me.

At the meeting in the same conference room where we began our day, I find myself more comfortable in my role as a researcher and as an observer as I relax in my chair now confident that the centerpiece is in fact a well constructed plastic representation of Mokara orchids, mango mini calla lilies, variegated ivy, and seeded eucalyptus. Sixteen minutes into the meeting of thirteen people, eleven of whom are white, one person has already spoken six times and I quickly deduce this is the person Louise warned me about on our walk to this location. The second meeting agenda item, related to city/campus transportation issues, has two names listed next to the item. One is the earlier noted middle-age white man with a receding hairline and a green plaid shirt tightly tucked in, revealing a gut stressing out the small white buttons holding the shirt together. The other person's name next to the agenda item is the undergraduate student body president, a white woman in her early 20s. Though both of these individuals have their names next to the agenda item, the man, sitting across from Louise at the large rectangular conference room, approaches the agenda item as a one-way monotone lecture like we are all freshmen sitting in a 250 person lecture hall listening to a presentation about Opportunity Cost in an Introduction Macroeconomics class. After six minutes of

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uninterrupted pontification about city bus usage statistics, Louise coyly and masterfully interrupts this man mid-sentence, thanking him for his contribution and asking the student body president her thoughts on waivers and liability issues. Initially ignoring the interruption by saying, "I wanted to share one more thing," Louise with a demonstrative smile that somehow seems more warm than patronizing says, "we would really like to hear from Sarah (pseudonym) on this before we move on." Sarah accepts the invitation and the meeting progresses. I study the man's nonverbal behavior after he was twice interrupted by the meeting moderator, Louise, and he does not at all seem perturbed that his comments were truncated. At the conclusion of the very productive meeting, when all have begun to stand up and exit the conference room, I notice Louise immediately seek out this man and thank him for coming; a quick exchange which I translate as a repair attempt. Upon reflection, I think I was again writing a narrative about an interpersonal conflict between the two actors which was present only in my head, for when I ask Louise about the interaction in our exit interview, she minimizes the interaction and does not validate my assertion that it is an example of social justice leadership.

At 3:30pm we return to Louise's office to process our day. She is as engaged and alert as she was at 9:30am, contradicting her earlier statement that she tends to get tired in the afternoon. She beings by telling me it has been fun having me around all day, and quickly transitions into a role-reversal with her asking me my thoughts about the day, and specifically about things I may have picked up on. I feel like David Frost deferring to Richard Nixon, and my insecurity tells me I am somehow not doing my job as a researcher. I fear I did not offer much in terms of novelty as I flounder to answer Louise's questions, and somehow I am able to again shift the tables increasing my comfort, and I ask her if I can turn the tape recorder back on to ask her some more questions. Slightly discomforted by my assertiveness, a young white man controlling the social situation with a woman of color who gets stopped in grocery stores and restaurants due to her familiarity and subsequent respect in this mid-sized college town, I quickly recover from my brazenness and assume the role of interviewer like Mr. Frost manipulating President Nixon into his famous, "If the President does it, that means it is not illegal," comment.

The conversation quickly steers back onto a path related to leadership, and Louise describes her leadership style using the work of popular organizational theorists Bolman and Deal (2008). She shares that she participated in a prestigious Harvard University training for leaders where she came to appreciate the importance of symbolic leadership:

> The leadership style, I cannot even remember all of them, but the symbolic one was one that often people in leadership positions forget about, or don't think about. And that, in many ways, sometimes, is the most important thing that you have.

Louise reflects that she has been intentional about leadership even before she acquired the academic language to articulate what she already did by intuition:

> I have always been a consensus type of inclusive leader. Like, who else needs to be involved in this? I never needed to be in front. I wouldn't mind getting everybody together having people do things but having someone else even take the credit for it.

For Louise, symbolic leadership also means being open to feedback on her leadership practices from her employees. She speaks about being and staying humble several times throughout the day, though aside from critical self-reflection, examples of others helping her with this quest are elusive. After probing for examples it becomes clear that despite Louise's statements, her subordinates do not often offer critical feedback:

> Louise: But, as I tell my VP council, my leadership team, people in this office all the time, don't let me get too big for my britches here. You all need to call me out if I need to be called out. You have a responsibility to do that, because we did not do that with (the previous Vice President). And it got bad, and it impacted people's lives, and their work. And, sometimes you can't see it…I tell them that all the time.
>
> Interviewer: Do they do it?
>
> Louise: (9 second pause) Sometimes. Yeah. For (4 second pause)…I guess, fortunately I have not gone too far out there, normally I catch myself.

Louise spends substantial time constructing an identity that is open to feedback. Invitational rhetoric, the use of first names, never asking students or staff call her "Dr.," and her active listening skills all support this assertion. It is subsequently notable that while being open to feedback is important to Louise, examples of this in practice are difficult to identify.

While Louise is unable to come up with examples of her immediate staff giving her critical feedback, it is clear in the interview that she has, directly or indirectly, received feedback from subordinates related to perceptions of her social justice activism. Perhaps Louise is caught in a double-bind, common for women in sexist and patriarchal settings. If she is too assertive, she is a bitch, but if she is not assertive enough, men will perceive her to be a weak leader. Yet Louise is not only a woman, but also a person of color, identities which she cannot, and perhaps does not want to separate. These intersecting identities inform her self-actualization around being a role model. And Louise has high, perhaps unattainable expectations for herself. "When I make a mistake, I feel horrible…because I feel like I have let down not just me, my race, my gender, you know, I am not allowed to make a mistake." This self-induced pressure clearly has an impact on Louise, as when we explore these feelings her speech slows down, inflection baselines, and she breaks eye contact more frequently as if she is in contemplative reflection.

Later our discussion again returns to race, like a poorly aligned car always pulling to the right, as she shares what is clearly a source of dissonance for her:

> I try not to, but I do take it personally when people are like, well you know, she does not know, you know, that she is not Black anymore, she does not do this, that. Fortunately, I don't think most, a lot of people feel that way, because I try to get out there enough as who I am, and I lay it out there, and I try to make connections with students. But it's hard, because when people don't know you, and you are in a leadership position, you are always suspect.

Always being questioned, particularly related to being a woman of color, is part of the reason Louise never intentionally sought out being a Vice President. The fear of being questioned and the dearth of role models for executives who share her identities have

been salient to Louise from early on in her career, "There were not role models, of women of color, with families, who were in these types of positions." While Louise mentions several times the lack of role models, she also notes a mentor, a woman of color, as being crucial to her professional success. This mentor encouraged Louise to seek professional opportunities and addressed her insecurity by pointing out that many educational leaders, who were virtually exclusively white men, are themselves flawed. These white men often mask a lack of knowledge with assertiveness like a Frilled Lizard expanding the flaps of skin flanking its face to intimidate cautious predators.

> (Louise's mentor), wise woman, you know, she, when I would tell her I did not want these jobs because I didn't think I knew enough, and all that, she goes, 'Louise, look at the mistakes the white men make all the time. You can't do any worse than they do.'

This reminder was comforting to Louise. As she tells this story in our interview we share a demonstrative smile as if to validate each other as we recall the dozens of incompetent white men in leadership positions we have observed over the years.

As second interview of the day concludes, our discussions turn to policy and hiring practices related to social justice. Race and hiring is an important topic when studying social justice leadership practices because hiring reflects one of the most important social justice actions with which a leader can engage (Fernandez & Fernandez-Mateo, 2006). My observations throughout the day reveal 34 different meeting participants, 6 of whom I visually deemed to be people of color (which equals 18%, if I removed Louise from this sample, the percentage drops to 10%). Related to hiring she shares that:

> Every time we do a search, everybody knows we want to try and get diverse candidates, women if it's more male dominated, people of color, GLBT, if it's appropriate. So, broadly, who do you need to be at the table?

In addition to hiring Louise asserts that diversity broadly, and race specifically, are prominent topics in discussions, planning, and visioning meetings throughout the division of student affairs. This assertion is confirmed by the salience of diversity in the division mission statement, strategic planning documents, and by the racially diverse student pictures in promotional materials. Louise elaborates:

> I think we are used to in student affairs, it's [diversity] something that we talk about but it's one of our core values as we do our strategic plan. It's one of the core things we raise money for, that is a value, and if people don't have that, then, I think this is a hard place for them to work.

As our interview and my shadowing experience concludes it becomes clear that Louise's commitment to diversity and social justice is personal as well as professional. Her aspirations for transparency and consistency clearly weigh on her like an ever-present backpack, at times unfelt and comfortable, other times strenuous and burdensome. From informal conversations with her colleagues, observed verbal and nonverbal reverence for Louise by others, document analysis, and through artifacts, such as how she decorates and furnishes her large office, she seems to approach comfortable self-actualization related to social justice leadership. Nonetheless, she dissects her every move, every

word, and every picture in her office, seeking authenticity. When asked about how she decorates her office she shares:

> I have to have a picture of my family….I have to have a picture of my history…Black student services. I have the books that I chose, the pictures that I put up, I get Christmas cards from staff, and they send me pictures of their kids and I put that up…a Kente cloth up there, you know, I like to feel, I want it to be a warm place…We just added the couch, because I didn't have a couch, and it's like, I need something.

Interestingly, the couch functions as more ornamental than practical. Louise has only sat in it twice for short periods of time, and it has not yet been visited by other people coming into her office. Perhaps more than anything, the couch, unused but ready, represents Louise's social justice leadership. She knows that the couch communicates something to others; openness, intentionality, comfort. But I am not sure the couch is there, practically, for other people or even Louise to sit on. I think the unused couch is symbolically for Louise, even if she never rests on the plush brown oversized pillows. The couch represents the kind of leader Louise aspires to be. Open. Receptive. Transparent. Calculated. Politically savvy. And more than anything else, intentional. And based on the diverse data collected through this educational criticism, Louise's aspirations are virtually always met.

Appendix G

SSAO Responses to Dissertation

Hi Ryan:

I have quickly perused the attached draft and hope to soon be able to read it with greater focus and without interruption I fully expected you to be constructively critical of what you heard & observed during your visit to NJC. I am cognizant of my shortcomings, as you well know. For you to be so keenly aware of them, as well, in no way troubles me. I do not get defensive about them at all. In fact, I can't help but smile when I see how evident they were to you, and how well you documented them in your dissertation. I think you summed up your time spent with me quite well.

I would argue that I am not a "nervous cat" Lol! But if that is how others see me, so be it. My partner may actually tend to agree with them. And I hope Niagara Falls is more mesmerizing than my computer screen. But I have never seen Niagara, so I can't be sure. Regardless, I will "allow" you to use that comparison as written, as part of your literary right of being the author

To be serious for a moment, I appreciate the fact that you see my conviction for consistency. I also am honored and humbled that you describe me as a person of integrity. And you summarized nicely the ongoing struggle I have with doing good versus doing right. You have inspired me to look at NJC through different lenses—not just through how I presently see things, despite my open-mindedness . But how I and others NEED to see things. To be a change agent takes courage and boldness, but it also takes research and understanding. I always liked to think of myself as having an understanding about social justice issues, but it was extremely limited in scope. It was more self-taught, as opposed to being taught through broader means. Thus, it is far from all it can be or should be.

You are certainly far more intellectual & analytical than I will ever be. And I would expect that from a doctoral student—both in conversation and in a written dissertation. And I am clearly more simplistic, but I am knowledgeable and realistic and practical, without being cynical. I will never be to a point where I say, "That's all….I am as I am— no more change." I hope to continually change and grow and lead and influence. I hope social justice is not merely some politically correct movement or buzz word; I hope we can take it from concept to practice on the NJC campus and in Higher Ed. I firmly believe it indeed starts with me on this campus.

While I do not embrace all that you do surrounding the many facets of social justice that we talked about and that you documented in your dissertation, I absolutely will die on the mountain that everyone deserves dignity and equity. All need to be shown compassion.

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And from someone in my position, they need to know that whatever their cause or issue or state or standing—whatever they chose to self-disclose or share or convey with passion—I AM THEIR ADVOCATE! I cannot undo my privilege, but I can minimize whatever I convey that seems to be polarizing. Much of my life is lived sub-consciously. As I strive to grow, learn, understand all of this more, I will strive, as well, to live life with greater intentionality toward those who experience oppression from others— whether deliberate or unintentional.

From the bottom of my heart, Ryan, thank you for sharing this with me. Thank you for being critical—and complimentary. And thank you for being genuine. I can't wait to visit with you again—soon. Come out when you like. It's an open invitation. And perhaps I could call upon you when I am in the metro area. Let's continue this discussion.

Sincerely,

John

Ryan,

Your nervous comment prompted my immediate review! No need for you to feel nervous….actually I am deeply touched by your writing and insights. Although I have only had a chance to skim – your writing is beautiful and your language choice is inspiring. You have created doctoral research in poetic verse. I will read more carefully by the weekend…meetings; more meetings and IFC tonight. I'll be back in touch with more thorough feedback, but at first glimpse, you have captured my alter ego Lynne well!

I'm in awe of your keen observations/perceptions, vast theoretical foundation and your beautiful writing! Have much I would like to talk about with you. Are you still accepting feedback as I have a couple of paragraphs that I would like to discuss.

I have learned very much from your dissertation, your eloquence in writing and from the literature review. Also I have valued deeply from your careful review of my leadership and that of John. Your candor related to how I can expand in my leadership for social justice policy and practice is greatly beneficial to me. I honor your experience and your deep understanding Ryan. You have definitely inspired me to reflect on my own experience and practice.

I am a bit embarrassed at my direct quotations in your dissertation as my English is so poorly executed! Gosh I need to clean up my act in conversations. ;-) I can appreciate

that you are providing direct quotes from your transcript so lesson for me is be more careful with language when being interviewed!

Your ability to capture the nuance of meaning in casual discussions and meetings is a rare talent. I sincerely can't figure out how you took in EVERYTHING and then wrote about it and connected it with the literature!

Hope you can take tonight off and be with Lindsay and Lane!

Rest my friend,

Lynne